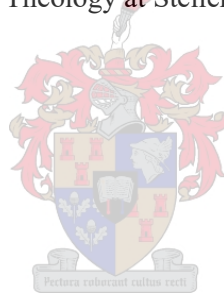


Paul's spirituality in Phil 3:1-11: The role of the Bible in Christian spirituality

BY

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DECLARATION

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OPSOMMING

In hierdie proefskrif argumenteer ek vir die belang van die Bybel as die bevoordeelde teks van Christelike spiritualiteit. As die Bybel gebruik word as die bevoordeelde teks in die assesering van godsdienstige ervaring, kan die Bybel Christelike spiritualiteit voorsien van 'n soliede basis en direksie. Die beperkte en onverantwoordelike gebruik van die bybelse teks as die bevoordeelde teks van Christelike spiritualiteit kan om verskeie redes as problematies beskou word. 'n Beperkte en 'n onverantwoordelike gebruik van die bybelse teks in die assesering van godsdienstige ervarings kan onvermydelik lei tot neurose en selfsugtigheid, dit kan aanmatigend word, en dit kan selfs gewelddadig raak. Verwarring, dwaling, wanbalans, afgodery, en 'n gebrek aan geestelike onderskeiding is van die moontlike kenmerke van 'n Christelike spiritualiteit wat die Bybel as 'n geestelike hulpbron afskeep.

Fil 3:1-11 sal funksioneer as 'n gevalle studie om aan te toon watter waardevolle bydrae die bybelse teks kan maak wanneer dit 'n voorkeur-rol vervul in die assesering van godsdienstige ervarings. Dit is my veronderstelling dat die eksegetiese insigte vanuit 3:1-11 kan funksioneer as 'n teenbalans vir die tekortkominge wat aanwesig is in verskeie moderne benaderings tot, en definisies van, Christelike spiritualiteit. Ek is van mening dat die tradisionele teologiese kategorieë van regverdiging, aanneming, en heiligmaking kan dien as bruikbare en waardevolle kategorieë vir die ondersoek na die implikasies van 3:1-11 vir Christelike spiritualiteit. Ek stel voor dat Paulus se spiritualiteit in 3:1-11 kan funksioneer as 'n teenmiddel vir die interne druk wat die Christendom tans beleef om nuwe teologiese interpretasie toe te pas in lyn met deurlopende kulturele verandering. Ek stel verder voor dat die insigte vanuit 3:1-11 met betrekking tot die effek van die Christus-gebeure kan dien as 'n teenmiddel vir die eksterne druk wat die Christendom tans beleef om oplossings te bied vir die behoeftes van die wêreld deur middel van Bybelse gewete-vorming.

Ek maak van twee oorkoepelende metodologiese benaderings gebruik om 'n duidelike strukturele raamwerk te voorsien vir my navorsing. Die eerste metodologiese benadering beoog om

‘n verantwoordelike hermeneutiek en eksegeese te bied wanneer die bybelse teks funksioneer as die beoordeelde teks van Christelike spiritualiteit. My eksegetiese metode van voorkeur is die sosio-retoriese metode van Vernon K. Robbins. Die tweede en breër metodologiese benadering is ‘n literatuur studie van spiritualiteit in die huidige formaat daarvan om die vloeibaarheid aan te dui van pogings om spiritualiteit en Christelike spiritualiteit te probeer definieër.

Hierdie proefskrif bestaan uit vyf hoofstukke. In hoofstuk een bied ek die motivering en doel, die probleemstelling, die hipotese, die metodologie, en die hoofstuk-indeling. In hoofstukke twee en drie bied ek ‘n sosio-retoriese lees van Fil 3:1-11. In hoofstuk vier bied ek ‘n oorsig oor die digte en populêre akademiese veld van spiritualiteit en Christelike spiritualiteit om sodoende ‘n beter insig te kry in wat Christelike spiritualiteit behels. Ek sal ook voorstelle aanbied oor die maniere waarop die bevindinge van die eksegetiese studie van 3:1-11 kan bydra tot die bestudering van Christelike spiritualiteit. In hoofstuk vyf bied ek ‘n opsomming en gevolgtrekking van die bevindinge van my navorsing.

ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I argue the importance of the biblical text as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. Whenever the biblical text is used as the privileged text in the assessment of religious experience, the biblical text can provide Christian spirituality with rootedness and direction. The limited and irresponsible use of the biblical text as the privileged text of Christian spirituality can be considered problematic for several reasons. A limited and irresponsible use of the biblical text when assessing any type of religious experience can inevitably lead to neurosis and selfishness, can become pretentious, and can even turn violent. Confusion, error, imbalance, idolatry, and a lack of spiritual discernment can be some of the characteristics of a Christian spirituality which neglects the Bible as a spiritual resource.

Phil 3:1-11 will function as a case study in order to highlight the valuable contribution that the biblical text can make when it is given a preferential role in the assessment of religious experience. It is my assumption that the exegetical insights gained from 3:1-11 can function as a counterweight to the shortcomings present in many modern approaches to, and definitions of, Christian spirituality. I am of the opinion that the traditional theological categories of justification, adoption, and sanctification could serve as useful and valuable categories for the investigation of the implications of 3:1-11 for Christian spirituality. I suggest that the results of Paul's careful consideration of his experience of the resurrected Jesus in light of scripture - as presented in Phil 3:1-11 - can function as an antidote to the current internal pressure which Christianity faces to adopt new theological interpretation in line with continual cultural change. I also suggest that the insights gained from 3:1-11 regarding the effects of the Christ-event can serve as an antidote to the external pressure Christianity currently experiences in the form of having to provide solutions to the needs of the world by means of biblical conscience-formation.

I will make use of two overarching methodological approaches to provide a clear structural framework for my research. The first methodological approach aims to provide accountable and

responsible hermeneutics and exegesis when the biblical text is used as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. My exegetical method of choice is the socio-rhetorical criticism of Vernon K. Robbins. The second and broader, or overarching methodological approach is a literature study of spirituality in its current form in order to highlight the fluidity involved in attempts to define spirituality and Christian spirituality.

My study is comprised of five chapters. In the first chapter I present the motivation and aim, the problem statement, the hypothesis, the methodology, and a chapter layout. In chapters two and three I present a socio-rhetorical reading of Phil 3:1-11. In chapter four I attempt to sort through the very dense and currently popular academic fields of spirituality and Christian spirituality in order to better grasp what Christian spirituality entails. I will discuss suggestions regarding the ways in which the findings from the exegetical study of 3:1-11 can contribute to the study of Christian spirituality. In chapter five I present a concluding summary of the findings of my research.

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Chapter one

Introduction

1. Introduction

Christian spirituality is currently a very popular term. For many spirituality is an experience which cannot be validated nor challenged. The study of spirituality as an academic discipline, therefore, needs methodological clarity. In this dissertation I will argue the importance of the biblical text, as the privileged text of Christian spirituality, being given a preferential role in the assessment of religious experience. The Bible can be described as “the outcome of how religious people experienced their transformational relationship with the divine in terms of their historically unique spiritual journeys” (de Villiers 2009:3-4). Traditionally four methodological approaches to the study of spirituality have been followed¹. I am of the opinion that the historical approach to the study of spirituality should be given a preferential role. I will explain these aspects in greater detail below.

Since the focus is on the Bible and spirituality, this study is located within biblical, and more precisely New Testament studies. Phil 3:1-11² will function as a case study in order to highlight the valuable contribution that the historical approach to the study of spirituality can make in the assessment of religious experience. The demarcated text, I suggest, is “long enough to allow for meaningful analysis, but at the same time short enough to be readily comprehended and focused upon” (du Toit 2009:126).

In Phil 3:1-11 Paul’s autobiographical sketch serves as an example of the humility and faithfulness of Jesus as described in 2:6-11. As will be indicated in the hypothesis section, as well as

¹ See the work of Schneiders (2005a:19-28) and Downey (1997:Kindle locations 1474-1481).

² In Phil 3:7-11, specifically, Paul provides a description of the relationship between *pistis* and righteousness which is shorter than, but closely related to that which is found in Gal 2 and Rom 3 (Morgan 2015:302-303).

the argumentative texture of the exegetical work, Paul presents the example of the faithfulness and humility of Jesus to the Philippian Jesus-followers as an example to imitate in the face of their very own internal and external struggles. It can be argued, in the light of this, that Paul's autobiographical sketch in 3:1-11 functions as an example of the very essence of the spirituality of the letter to the Philippians as a whole. I suggest, therefore, that an attempt to construct Paul's spirituality in his letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers based on only eleven verses, is entirely justified. I would argue further that an attempt to come to an understanding of Paul's spirituality based on 3:1-11 enhances the focus of this investigation, and increases the likelihood of coming to a clear and meaningful comprehension of Paul's spirituality as presented in the Philippian letter as a whole.

Finally, I am also of the opinion that a study on Paul's spirituality in Phil 3:1-11 can make a significant contribution to an understanding of Paul's spirituality as a whole. As far as I know, no other studies have been done on Paul's spirituality in 3:1-11³. There is, therefore, a need for such a study and the results of this research could prove to be very fruitful in terms of enriching an understanding of Paul's spirituality.

The socio-rhetorical criticism of Vernon K. Robbins will be my exegetical method of choice. This study, then, is focused on the relationship between the Bible and spirituality, and will explore how the Bible feeds into and informs Christian spirituality. It is acknowledged that this study focuses on one New Testament text only, aiming to explore its relevance for Christian spirituality, and so to provide an in-depth, credible and accountable engagement of the relationship between the Bible and spirituality.

³ Given the central role that Phil 3 has played in arguments that prefer to refer to Paul's experience of the resurrected Jesus as a "call" and not a "conversion" (see, e.g. the 1963 work titled "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West" by Krister Stendahl), it is quite surprising that Phil 3 has not played a more prominent role within the field of biblical and Pauline spirituality.

2. **Motivation and aim**

Spirituality can be defined as “the Christian’s total response of faith, made effective through love and vivified by the Holy Spirit, to God’s self-manifestation in Christ” (Grech 2011:Kindle locations 14). Spirituality, whether viewed from a religious perspective or not, is currently a very popular term. However, this surge of interest in the term complicates defining the term, since it is not a single transcultural phenomenon. What is of importance in this study, is that the study of spirituality “focuses on lived, or experienced faith and not on abstract theological or doctrinal issues” (de Villiers 2009:3). A certain kind of experience, whether termed religious, mystical or spiritual, comprises the kernel of religion (Taves 2009:3-4)⁴.

An outstanding characteristic of the current spirituality-craze is a movement from outer-directed forms of authority towards inner-directed experience as that which is most authoritative and trustworthy (Sheldrake 2013:5). This individualistic and narcissistic focus, which is further characterized by an escapist mentality which seeks to avoid or dismiss suffering and pain in this life, is a highly problematic development. Gorman (2001:2) is right when he says that, in religious environments, spirituality is often understood as “vague emotion without substantive content, or as an experience that can neither be validated nor challenged.” Gorman’s sharp observation is applicable to many modern forms of spirituality.

In the face of these narcissistic, individualistic, and escapist tendencies present in many modern approaches to spirituality, Christian spirituality is in desperate need of a solid rootedness and clear direction. What could possibly provide the much-needed rootedness and direction required in many modern forms of Christian spirituality? What source could function as a reliable assessment for religious forms of experience? Eugene Peterson describes this urgent need by saying that: “contemporary spirituality desperately needs focus, precision, and roots: focus on Christ, precision in

⁴ Taves (2009:4) quotes the definition of William James on religious experience as, “*the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider divine*” (emphasis in original).

the Scriptures, and roots in a healthy tradition” (Peterson 1997:Kindle locations 462-463). In this dissertation I will explore how the Bible, as the privileged text of Christian spirituality, can aid in providing rootedness and clear direction for the assessment of religious experience.

The Bible is the privileged text of Christian spirituality since it contains the foundational texts regarding Jesus into which believers weave their lives. For most Christians, it is a God-given resource and guide to Christian spirituality (Adam 2004:19). The New Testament provide invaluable resources to develop an accountable spirituality. Various authors have pointed in this direction. Thurston (2005:58) says that New Testament spirituality has to be bound by the text. Kourie (2000:14) highlights the Bible as the foundation of Christian spirituality. Perrin (2007:39) confirms the Bible as the privileged text for Christian spirituality, because it contains the story of Jesus.

Peterson (1997:Kindle locations 80-82 & 1036) is adamant that the biblical text functions as the primary source of Christian spirituality, as an antidote when individual experience is seen as the authoritative text for our spirituality. Whenever individual experience is seen as the authoritative text for our spirituality, Christian spirituality often develops into neurosis and selfishness, can become pretentious, and even turn violent. He believes this happens at the exact moment when we step outside of the biblical story as the authoritative text for our lives and experience.

In a very insightful article concerning the dangers posed by spiritual abuse, Pretorius (2007:267-273) lists several important and prominent characteristics evident in spiritual abuse. One of the characteristics he mentions, namely, an unbalanced approach, has as one of its extremes an approach to Christian life which he describes as “an extremely subjective approach to Christian life” (2007:270). In this extreme instance, more weight is given to feelings and experience than to what the Bible declares: “followers are made to believe that they do not need to test each directive against the Scripture” (2007:270). Another tactic concerns their strange and unique methods of Bible interpretation (2007:270).

There are, of course, those who are more sceptical about the use of the biblical text in the study of spirituality. I am well-aware of Downey's (1997:Kindle locations 1527-1531) criticism of the historical approach to the study of Christian spirituality. Downey believes that the focus of the historical approach may be too narrow if its focus is only on texts or documents from the past. For Downey, a disciplined study of spirituality must cast the net wider since Christian spiritual experience is not reducible to the history of Christian spirituality as it is expressed in historical texts. I agree with Downey on all these points: the net must be cast wider than only the texts or documents from the past. But, I want to add that a firm grasp of the "Christian story wherein God is revealed to be the God of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit" (1997:Kindle locations 1775), namely, the biblical story, is essential in order to assess any humanly constructed expressions of meaning⁵. Christian spiritual experiences are not reducible to the history of Christian spirituality as it is expressed in historical texts - in this case, the Bible - but any modern Christian spiritual experience receives its direction and rootedness from these texts. The net may need to be cast wider, but it cannot be cast in a completely different direction. These texts from an older epoch can profitably be the starting point in any study of spirituality.

The approach I take in studying spirituality, therefore, needs to be an approach which understands and accepts the centrality of the biblical story as the authoritative text for our lives and for our religious experience⁶. Fortunately, there is an approach which fits this requirement: the

⁵ By implication, it might, therefore, seem that I am affording to the canon of biblical texts a status which ignores the role that humans played in the construction of these texts. My own view of and my own approach to Scripture - which can be defined as the "privileged text of Christian spirituality" - is informed in many ways by the wording in Paul's second letter to Timothy: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NIV). Of this text, David Lincicum writes, "This statement could be read without difficulty as a synthetic judgement about the nature of the scriptures arrived at by careful reflection on how the apostle himself had put them to use in his letters" (2020:235). "God-breathed" is a belief that I share with the biblical author of 2 Timothy in my efforts to define and to understand the nature of the whole biblical canon - even though I apply an expanded understanding of the term "All Scripture" when compared to the author's use in 2 Timothy. In saying this, I do acknowledge, however, the role of human beings in the construction of these biblical texts, hence my emphasis in this dissertation on the importance of exegetical work in the reading of a biblical text as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. The nature of these canonical biblical texts - defined here as "God-breathed" - uniquely qualifies the biblical text, in my opinion, as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. My argument, therefore, remains: the canonical witness of these biblical texts can profitably be the starting point in any study of spirituality.

⁶ Taves (2009:8) asks whether religious experience can be studied by those interested in understanding such experiences.

historical approach to the study of spirituality. Since religious experiences can only be accessed in its articulations “the student of spirituality is always dealing with ‘texts’ ... Verbalization, texts, drawings, dreams, behaviours, and other such articulations” (Schneiders 2005a:18).

Sandra Schneiders, Walter Principe, Bernard McGinn, and Joan Wolski Conn have all done important work regarding methodology in the scholarly discipline of spirituality (Downey 1997:Kindle locations 1400). McGinn, in particular, is a fine example of the use of the historical approach in the study of Christian spirituality⁷.

Schneiders (2005a:16) describes the scholarly discipline of spirituality as a research discipline whose specific objective is the “expansion of our knowledge and understanding of the God-human relationship.” Schneiders (2005a:19-28) lists three approaches to the study of spirituality: the historical, the theological, and the anthropological approach. The historical approach is primarily the work of professional historians whose methods tend to be hermeneutical historical disciplines augmented by theological expertise. The theological approach emphasizes the specifically Christian character of the subject matter and the constitutive role of Christian theology in the methodologies. The anthropological approach emphasizes hermeneutical methodologies and are concerned with dimensions of spirituality that are accessible only to non-theological disciplines. According to Downey (1997:Kindle locations 1723) a fourth method can also be added to the list given by Schneiders: the hermeneutical approach to the study of Christian spirituality.

⁷ See McGinn’s six-volume study, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism*. Vol. I: *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century*. New York: Crossroad, 1992; Vol. II: *The Growth of Mysticism: From Gregory the Great through the Twelfth Century*. New York: Crossroad, 1994; Vol. III: *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism 1200-1350*. New York: Crossroad, 1998; Vol. IV: *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*. New York: Crossroad, 2005; Vol. V: *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism 1350-1550*. New York: Crossroad, 2016; Vol. VI, Part 1: *Mysticism in the Reformation 1500-1650*. New York: Crossroad, 2017; Vol. VI, Part 2: *Mysticism in the Golden Age of Spain 1500-1650*. New York: Crossroad, 2017.

Michael Downey (1997), in turn, also indicates four approaches to the study of spirituality⁸. Downey (1997:Kindle locations 1474-1481), like Schneiders, also refers to the theological⁹, anthropological¹⁰, and historical approaches, but he adds the appropriative¹¹ approach to the study of spirituality.

Schneiders's hermeneutical approach and/or Downey's appropriative method is more or less taken as normative by many scholars (Frohlich 2001:73). Even though both of these methods cover essential aspects of what we do when we study Christian spirituality, I am of the opinion that the historical approach to the study of Christian spirituality should always have right of way in terms of preceding all other approaches to the study of Christian spirituality. Downey (1997:Kindle locations 1574-1577) is correct in stating that the four methods of studying Christian spirituality are not mutually exclusive, but can rather assist in a deeper understanding of Christian spirituality. The historical approach to the study of Christian spirituality, however, firmly establishes the boundaries and the possibilities involved whenever "humanly constructed expressions of meaning" (Frohlich 2001:73) is being interpreted and assessed. With these perimeters clearly drawn up, the researcher has a solid footing, as well as a clear direction from which other approaches to the study of Christian spirituality can be more fruitfully applied. Affording the historical approach to the study of Christian spirituality preferred position provides the researcher with fertile conditions to effect wholesomeness through a study of Christian spirituality.

I will, therefore, make use of the historical approach to the study of Christian spirituality in this dissertation. In the midst of the narcissistic, individualistic and escapist dangers posed by the

⁸ He also mentions six emerging methods. The six emerging methods are: Feminism, liberation, ecological, consciousness, cultural pluralism, and marginality (Downey 1997:Kindle locations 1481). Perrin (2007:35) differentiates between a theological, historical, anthropological and hermeneutical approach (which corresponds to the appropriative method mentioned by Downey) to the study of Christian spirituality.

⁹ The theological method is focused on the transformation of the human nature into a new creation by grace and Spirit (Downey 1997:Kindle locations 1489-1497).

¹⁰ The anthropological method concerns itself with human experience as spiritual experience (Downey 1997:Kindle locations 1526-1534).

¹¹ The appropriative method wants to understand the Christian spiritual life as experience. The understanding occurs through interpretation and application, which, in turn, leads to transformation (Downey 1997:Kindle locations 1549-1557). This method is similar to Schneider's hermeneutical approach to the study of Christian spirituality.

undercurrents of the spirituality movement, the academic study of Christian spirituality - in the form of the historical approach to the study of Christian spirituality - can provide a solid rootedness and clear direction when assessing religious experience. I am of the opinion that a clear rootedness and direction such as this will not only be to the benefit of the academic discussion of Christian spirituality, but that it will also provide clear guidelines and a clear framework to the unique challenges which face the local church whose members are, of course, deeply susceptible to these narcissistic, individualistic and escapist influences doing the rounds in many modern forms of spirituality.

I hope to show, as a case study, how Paul's careful consideration of his experience of the resurrected Jesus, as he describes it in the text of Phil 3:1-11, has an invaluable contribution to make to the current discussion on Christian spirituality. The aim is to show both the importance of using the Bible as ultimate frame of reference for Christian spirituality, namely, religious experience, but at the same time also the inevitability of sound exegetical work in and competent hermeneutics towards biblical texts.

Paul's letters provide profound evidence of his "activity as a reader" (Lincicum 2020:225). Paul regularly appeals - with a tone of urgency - to the authority of predecessor texts to illustrate his claims¹². These texts primarily come from the "ancient library of Jewish scriptures" (2020:225): "In the givenness of the scriptural texts ... Paul finds a pluripotent fund on which to draw for his varied purposes" (2020:231). Paul's zeal for the traditions of his ancestors (see Gal 1:14) contributed to his intimate knowledge and his deep acquaintance of Israel's scriptures in their Greek form. On the whole, Paul draws his citations from Septuagintal¹³ texts¹⁴ (2020:225-232).

¹² Two biblical references highlight Paul's urgency in reading the scriptures, as well as his understanding of the usefulness of the scriptures. Firstly, Rom 15:4: "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (NIV). Secondly, 1 Cor 10:11: "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come" (NIV).

¹³ The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.

¹⁴ Paul seems to have quoted from "a contemporary tradition of revision that eventually became formalised in Theodotion" (Lincicum 2020:227).

Scripture and gospel, for Paul, mutually interprets each other. Scripture forms the basis for Paul's theology and his missionary praxis. For Paul, the scriptures are a gift from the triune God as directed to the "eschatological present" (2020:237). In his own reading of scripture, Paul wanders between radical originality and radical interrelatedness, employing scripture to explain both sides of this tension (2020:237).

Paul's letters are teeming with recollections of scripture. Not all of these recollections can, however, be termed as citations. Paul's references to scripture can be described, on the one end, as "verbatim quotations of scripture" (Lincicum 2020:228), and, on the other end, as "echoes of scriptural texts" (2020:228)¹⁵. It is not always possible to determine whether Paul intended the echo, or not. In between these two poles we find "unmarked citations and intentional allusions" (2020:229) to scriptural texts.

Paul's use of scripture is most concentrated in Galatians and Romans¹⁶. The correlative scarcity of Paul's reference to scripture in his other letters can be explained by referring to "the pressing questions he adjudicates and the epistolary constraints of brevity and focus" (Lincicum 2020:234). Even though the thickness of direct quotations of scripture is less in Paul's other letters, these letters still contain "allusion and scriptural turns of phrase, not to mention basic concepts that came to Paul by means of a reading of scripture" (2020:235)¹⁷.

From this brief overview of Paul's use of scripture, it is the category of "echoes of scriptural texts" which has relevance for the study in this dissertation. Given that Paul does not quote directly from scripture in Phil 3:1-11, it could be asked whether scripture plays any part in Paul's argument

¹⁵ In his book, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (1989), Richard Hays highlights the "ways in which allusions can draw into the text something of the original context of the predecessor text" (Lincicum 2020:229). These echoes in Paul's letters leads his audience to ask certain questions of the text. The sensitivity to these echoes and allusions thereby increases the reader's gratitude for Paul's literary achievements (2020:229).

According to Robbins (1996b:102) the use of scripture in the New Testament can be categorized into one of three categories, namely, recitation, recontextualization and reconfiguration.

¹⁶ "Roughly 25 percent of all quotations in the corpus Paulinum are clustered in Romans 9-11 ..." (Lincicum 2020:232-233).

¹⁷ Paul assumes the "basic contours of the major structuring narratives of Israel's history: the creation account, the Abraham story, the exodus, the Sinai covenant" (Lincicum 2020:232).

in 3:1-11? If so, in what way does scripture function in 3:1-11? Given Paul's propensity for referring to scripture on "the way to some other point" (Lincicum 2020:235) careful attention should be given to the rhetorical effect of Paul's use of scripture.

Paul's experience of the resurrected Jesus, as well as his careful consideration of this experience as described in Phil 3:1-11, provides Christian spirituality with a solid rootedness and clear direction. In Gen 17:10-14 (NIV) God says to Abraham: "This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner - those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

Even though Paul does not refer to Gen 17:12 directly in Phil 3:1-11, the echoes of this scriptural text can clearly be seen in Paul's use of terms such as περιτομή, "circumcision" (in 3:3 and 3:5), and νόμος, "law" (in 3:5, 3:6, and 3:9). By referring to a text from the past which describes the result of Paul's bringing of his religious experience with the resurrected Jesus into dialogue with a text from scripture, namely, Gen 17:12, certain perimeters can be established which provides clear direction for the assessment of any modern religious experience¹⁸.

¹⁸ Ann Taves (2009:8-9) indicates the benefits of "disaggregating" the concept of religious experience. According to Taves (2009:8) coming to an understanding of how anything becomes religious requires attention "to the processes whereby people sometimes ascribe the special characteristics to things that we ... associate with terms such as 'religious,' 'magical,' 'mystical,' 'spiritual' etcetera." Such a focus on "things deemed religious ... allows us to make a distinction between *simple ascriptions*, in which an individual thing is set apart as special, and *composite ascriptions*, in which simple ascriptions are incorporated into more complex formations, such as those that scholars and others designate as 'spiritualities' or 'religions'" (emphasis in original) (2009:9).

I suggest, therefore, that Phil 3:1-11 can provide rootedness and direction to the study of Christian spirituality on at least two levels. First, 3:1-11 indicates the way in which a religious experience is brought into dialogue with a text from scripture, namely, Gen 17. Second, 3:1-11 indicates the results of such a reading of scripture in light of a religious experience. I am of the opinion that 3:1-11, therefore, provides an example of rootedness in scripture, as well as an example of direction in terms of the results of this rootedness in scripture, namely, Paul's spirituality of weakness and vulnerability. Paul's careful consideration of his experience of the resurrected Jesus in light of Gen 17, can, therefore, also serve as an example of an authentic spirituality which reconsiders, challenges, reforms, or develops accepted interpretations of scripture (de Villiers 2009:4).

Any modern humanly constructed expressions of meaning based on a religious experience which contradicts the perimeters given by this privileged text, should be re-evaluated and reconsidered in the light of the guidelines extracted from the privileged text. The results that can be expected from such an approach to the assessment of any religious experience is a solid rootedness and a clear direction for the modern person's religious experience.

My aim is, therefore, to emphasise strongly that the biblical text, as the privileged text of Christian spirituality, should be given a preferential role in order to function as an invaluable source for the assessment of religious experience.

Does the Bible have any right of veto when church traditions, the opinions of believers, or modern value-systems challenges the authority-claims of the Bible? I am of the opinion that the Bible overrides all of these phenomena from the outside, *extra nos*. The Bible in its final form (*norma normata*) is the source which configures the existence of the church (*norma normans*) (Joubert 2012:24).

I am of the opinion that the traditional theological categories of justification, adoption, and sanctification could serve as useful and valuable categories for the investigation of the implications for Christian spirituality of Phil 3:1-11.

Paul's religious experience and his careful consideration of this experience as recorded in Phil 3:1-11 can, I believe, valuably function as an antidote to the internal pressure on Christianity to adopt new theological interpretation in line with continual cultural change. The cultural pressure that the Philippian Jesus-followers experienced came in the form of the ethnocentric-covenantalism propagated by the Judaizing opponents. Paul emphatically allays any fears or uncertainty which the Philippian Jesus-followers might have concerning the expectation which these opponents might create among them. The Philippian Jesus-followers have no need to conform to these external cultural expectations with their incessant insistence that circumcision is needed for gentile believers to become a part of God's family. The Philippian Jesus-followers are free from the pressure of having to live up to the cultural expectations of the Judaizing opponents. In the Christ-event, God has defeated all forms of power, including the power of culture to create relational dysfunction.

Paul's religious experience and his careful consideration of this experience as recorded in Phil 3:1-11 can, I believe, also function as an antidote to the external pressure Christianity currently experiences in the form of having to provide solutions to the needs of the world by means of biblical conscience-formation. The implications of the Christ-event, namely, the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus, in the life of a Jesus-follower (as Paul describes it in 3:1-11) will be presented as God enabling transformative participation in the life of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

God's family, as far as can be gathered from the analysis of Paul's letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers, is characterised by their humility and faithfulness, that is, their desire to be transformed by sharing in the suffering of Christ, by being conformed to the death of Jesus, as well as to be resurrected from the dead themselves. Paul most probably wrote the letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers to encourage them to remain loyal and faithful to the example of humility that the life, suffering and death of Jesus presented to them. I believe that Paul presents the solution to the challenges facing the Philippian Jesus-followers to be their own humility and faithfulness. In this regard, the text of Phil 2:6-11, as the heart of Paul's letter to the Jesus-followers in Philippi, serves as

the primary model of such dispositions. A paradox fuels Paul's argument in 3:1-11: true power is found in being powerless, not unlike what is found elsewhere in his writings, such as in 2 Cor 4:7-12 which is illustrative of Paul's spirituality of weakness and vulnerability (Manjaly 2009:31). In 2 Cor 12:9-10 (NIV) Paul even says, "'my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

The Christ-event benefits humanity not only when they believe this good news, but the Christ-event also benefits humanity when they participate in transformative justice corporately and individually. In other words, the Christ-event not only secures the status of Jesus-followers as being righteous, it also empowers Jesus-followers to live lives characterised by humility and faithfulness. The need for Christianity to provide leadership by means of shaping the conscience of its people through biblical teaching can valuably be based on Paul's mimesis of the kenosis of Jesus as it is expressed in Phil 3:1-11. The forming of a biblical conscience based on 3:1-11 should provide Jesus-followers with an understanding of the value and importance of a life lived in service of others. This life, when characterized by humility and faithfulness, is a Messiah-shaped spirituality of weakness and vulnerability. This, Paul suggests, is true power. And this, I suggest, empowers Christianity to provide solutions to the needs of the world which are useful and valuable.

It should also be clear that Phil 3:1-11 confirms the critical importance of a Christian spirituality which is often-times characterized by outer-directed forms of authority, that is, the biblical text and the triune God, and not by inner-directed forms of experience which is most authoritative and trustworthy.

3. **Problem statement**

My statements on the motivation and aim of this study would already have alerted the reader to the problem statement of this dissertation. Mary Frohlich (2001:69) describes the nature of the problem in dealing with spirituality in precise terms when she says, “we seem to be stranded on the shifting sand of lived experience, perhaps enjoying the dynamism but with no sure ground on which to move toward personal integration, let alone toward the more systemic thinking and communicating appropriate to the academy.”

When faced with the question of what the defining method for the study of Christian spirituality is, we are often times left frustrated by the murky answers that is given to this question. Perhaps Schneiders’ (2005:29) comment that the study of spirituality is “interdisciplinary by nature” and, therefore, does not have a method of its own, epitomizes the frustration that many experiences in this regard.

Frohlich attempts to solve this problem by arguing for a methodological principle, rather than any unique and specific method, specific to spirituality as a discipline, namely, the notion of “interiority” as fundamental to both the object and the method of the discipline of spirituality (Frohlich 2001:66). Frohlich (2001:74) defines “interiority” as, “a capacity for intimate, self-transcendent communion; ultimately it is the capacity to dwell in the personal and transcendent God, and to be a place-in-the-world where this God dwells.” Methodologically this means that we must begin by acknowledging that when we select, claim an understanding of, or evaluate something as “having to do with spirituality”, we do so based on our own living of spirituality - that is, our own spirits “fully in act” (2001:73).

I fully concur with Frohlich’s efforts to establish a methodological principle specific to spirituality as a discipline. Her insights regarding the need for the academic discipline of spirituality to claim and clarify its character as a form of spiritual discipline (Frohlich 2001:75), is commendable.

In my opinion, however, spirituality as a discipline also needs to identify the defining method in the study of the spiritual life.

According to Joubert (2012:17-18) the authority and function of the Bible is understood in different ways by different faith traditions. When confronted with questions of faith, Orthodox believers usually only turn to the church tradition within the Orthodox church for answers. Roman Catholic believers prefer listening to the pronouncements of their councils and the pope, whilst in the Reformed tradition the confessions of faith function as the overarching locus of control for an understanding of the Bible¹⁹. In addition to this, current contexts and value-systems are frequently used by theologians and believers as the primary keys for the interpretation of the Bible²⁰.

My assumption here is that many modern approaches to Christian spirituality suffers from either a very limited use of the biblical text as the privileged text of Christian spirituality, or from an irresponsible use of the biblical text in many instances when it is used as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. In a 2016 survey titled *American Views on Bible Reading*²¹, researchers found that 53% of participants have not read more than half of the Bible, whilst 35% indicated that they do not read the Bible on their own at all. Of those who have read at least a few sentences of the Bible on their own, 30% look up things in the Bible only once they have a need to do so. 27% look up verses or sections suggested by others, and only 22% systematically read through a section of the Bible (2016:6-7).

The irresponsible use of the Bible as a spiritual resource in the assessment of religious experience, also seems to be the case in a South African context. In a 2010 survey titled *Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*²² researchers found that 66% of

¹⁹ The “sola’s” also plays a very important role in the Reformed approach to an understanding of the Bible (Joubert 2021:18).

²⁰ See the two examples presented in chapter five of this phenomenon.

²¹ LifeWay Research conducted this study: <https://lifewayresearch.com/2017/04/25/lifeway-research-americans-are-fond-of-the-bible-dont-actually-read-it/>

²² The Pew Forum on Religion conducted this study: <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2010/04/sub-saharan-africa-full-report.pdf>.

participants from South Africa favour making the Bible the official law of the land. In addition to this, 73% of Christians says that the Bible is the literal Word of God (2010:11&26).

The positive picture that these statistics create of the view which many South African Christians have of the Bible, has to be considered, however, in light of the following statistics as well: 70% of the South African participants believe that God will grant them wealth and good health if they have enough faith (2010:31). 46% of participants still exhibit high levels of belief and practice of traditional African religions (2010:34). From these statistics it becomes clear that even in cases where the Bible is held in high regard as a spiritual resource for the assessment of religious experience, reader's use of the Bible can be described as irresponsible given the content of the religious beliefs and practices of the participants described above.

For a number of reasons, the limited use of the biblical text, as well as the irresponsible use of the biblical text, can be considered problematic. The neglect of the Bible as a spiritual resource lead to, "confusion, error, imbalance, idolatry, lack of spiritual discernment ... seduced away from the worship of Christ" (Adam 2004:20). A limited and irresponsible use of the biblical text when assessing any type of religious experience can inevitably lead to neurosis and selfishness, can become pretentious, and can even turn violent.

My interpretation of this neglect as a practical condition is taken as the ground for action. I wish to point out that Christian spirituality, even though it propagates the historical approach to the study of Christian spirituality, in many instances does not fully harness the potential and rich resources available to us in the biblical text as a tool which offers solid rootedness and clear direction in our efforts to interpret our experiences with that which is of ultimate concern to us, namely, the Triune God.

In this dissertation I aim to assist in the supplement of these shortcomings by answering two very important questions. First, what contribution does Paul's description in Phil 3:1-11 make to a

much larger discussion on Christian spirituality? Second, how does the description in 3:1-11 make this contribution?

I propose five questions to guide this quest:

- 1) Does the Bible function as the privileged text of Christian spirituality?
- 2) What is the importance of an understanding of the process of hermeneutics and exegesis in using the Bible as the privileged text of Christian spirituality?
- 3) What is a specifically Christian spirituality?
- 4) What is the nature of the relationship between theology and spirituality?
- 5) In what ways are the theological categories which Phil 3:1-11 contain of contemporary significance for Christianity?

These questions inform my investigations, although they will not all receive equal attention, and the design of this study is described in more detail below.

Furthermore, given that Paul describes, in vivid detail in Phil 3:1-11, the gradual process of transformation, the results of transformation, and the insights gained from a lifelong process of transformation, I will need to discuss five questions regarding the dynamics of transformation. I take my cue from a prominent scholar in the area of spirituality studies, Sheldrake (2013:40-41), who proposes five questions when discussing the dynamics of transformation. Those five questions are:

- 1) What needs to be transformed?
- 2) What factors stand in the way of transformation?
- 3) Where does transformation take place?
- 4) How does transformation take place?
- 5) What is the purpose of transformation?

Sheldrake's questions are subliminal to the wider research project conducted here, and do not replace the questions related to the problem statement. However, Sheldrake's questions highlight a number of crucial considerations in the discussion of Christian spirituality and are therefore in a related way important in tracing the broader perimeters of my own work.

To summarise, the problem statement of this dissertation is the limited and irresponsible use of the biblical text as the privileged text of Christian spirituality.

4. Hypothesis

It is my assumption that the exegetical insights gained from Phil 3:1-11 can function as a counterweight to the shortcomings present in many modern approaches to, and definitions of, Christian spirituality. I am of the opinion that the traditional theological categories of justification, adoption, and sanctification could serve as useful and valuable categories for the investigation of the implications of 3:1-11 for Christian spirituality. My suggestion is that these traditional theological categories can serve as an antidote to the trends of narcissism, individualism, as well as an antidote to an escapist mentality which seeks to avoid or dismiss suffering and pain in this life found in many modern approaches to spirituality.

The five questions of Sheldrake (2013:40-41) referred to in the section on the problem statement again can serve as initial orientating framework for appropriating the exegetical insights of the text of Phil 3:1-11. Sheldrake's questions provide me with an entry point for making important connections between the Bible, Paul and spirituality. The focus, however, is on Pauline spirituality as this can be gleaned from 3:1-11.

The first two questions are: what needs to transform and what stands in the way of transformation? A spirituality which relies on the Law for obtaining righteousness stands in the way of transformation. Paul refers to all things which stand in the way of knowing Christ as excrement (Phil 3:8). Those who do this are called mutilators, evil workers and dogs (3:2); trusting in

achievements and genealogy, namely, the flesh, for obtaining righteousness needs to be transformed; Paul warns his readers about those who do this (3:2). In summary: a spirituality of the Law needs to be transformed (3:4-6). And a spirituality of the Law stands in the way of the necessary transformation.

Sheldrake (2013:40-41) also asks: where and how does transformation take place? Transformation is set in motion through an intimate encounter with the risen Christ (Phil 3:7). It is because of God's grace that Paul can worship God through the Spirit and that he can boast in Christ Jesus (3:3). The *kenosis*-attitude of Christ, as Paul presents it in 2:6-11, sets in motion a lifelong process of transformation in the life of Paul the apostle. This process of transformation was driven continuously by *phronesis* (ἡγήεομαι "count/consider" is the word Paul uses three times in 3:1-11; this word has the same semantic range as φρονέω which Paul uses in 2:5 and which forms the basis of his use of ἡγήεομαι in 3:1-11). Trust, fidelity and loyalty to the faithfulness of Jesus justifies the believer (3:9) - this is what includes believers in God's covenant and in God's family; this is what circumcision entails. This justification is lived out within the context of a community of believers, namely, God's family (3:1). This community is a family of brothers and sisters in Christ (3:1). Transformation, therefore, takes place in Christ and in community through the power of the Spirit.

Lastly, Sheldrake (2013:40-41) asks: what is the aim of transformation?

This *phronesis* brings Paul to the following conclusion: his ultimate aim is to know (γινῶσις) Christ, namely, to be found in him, to share in the power of his resurrection, to have the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, and to become like him in his death. In other words, Paul's ultimate goal, as presented in Phil 3:1-11, is to mimic (*mimesis*) the *kenosis* (to empty oneself of power) of Christ and to then be physically resurrected from the dead. In the section on argumentative texture I suggest that Paul presents a theology of martyrdom as strategy for withstanding both the internal and the external pressures facing the Philippian community. This theology of martyrdom finds primary expression in the humility and faithfulness of Jesus as Paul presents it in 2:6-11. Through Paul's

presentation of the examples of Timothy (humility in 2:19-24) and Epaphroditus (faithfulness in 2:25-30) the Jesus-followers in Philippi have examples from the lives of fellow Jesus-followers of a theology of martyrdom. This, I believe, is what it means for the Jesus-followers in Philippi to live a life in accordance with 1:27 (NIV): “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” In 3:1-11 Paul also presents his own life as an example of the humility and faithfulness of Jesus.

Paul’s *mimesis* is, therefore, a knowledge of Christ rather than a confidence in the flesh. In the past, this was based on Paul’s ability to obey the Law of Moses (a spirituality of the Law characterized by circumcision, namely, heritage and achievements). Paul now considers (ἡγέομαι) this as excrement. Worshipping God in the Spirit through a life of trust, loyalty and fidelity to the faithfulness of Jesus characterizes Paul’s process of transformation which culminates at the resurrection out from among the physically dead at the Parousia of Christ. This eschatological motif determines the reaction of the believer to any and all circumstances in this life. As Paul indicates sixteen times in this letter, and, also at the start of this passage, this truth can only have one appropriate result: Rejoice in the Lord! (3:1), no matter what.

In Phil 3:8-11 Paul stipulates the results of his life-changing encounter with the risen Christ: what he previously counted as gain he now counts as loss. Paul wants to know Christ; he wants to be found in Christ, that is, to gain him and to know the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead (3:7-11).

The resurrection of Christ in the past informs Paul’s hope for future glorification: because Jesus was raised from the dead, believers will be raised with him at his parousia (the expectation which Paul expresses with his reference to the bodily resurrection at the end of Phil 3:11) - all of which ensures that the believer can share in the sufferings of Christ (whatever they may be), being conformed to him in his death (this expresses Paul’s desire to be continually transformed in his nature

in accordance with the nature of Christ). The power and fellowship of the risen Jesus is guaranteed to the believer on the path of faithfulness. The power and fellowship of Jesus - through the Spirit and in community with other believers - births and sustains the believers' spirituality. Paul strategy for both the internal and the external pressures facing the Philippian community is a theology of martyrdom. In Phil 3:4-11 Paul presents the practical ways in which his own life is transformed in the example of the humility and faithfulness of Jesus himself as was presented in 2:6-11.

As part of the problem statement I asked the following questions. First, what contribution does Paul's description in Phil 3:1-11 make to a much larger discussion on Christian spirituality? Second, how does the description in 3:1-11 make this contribution?

I suggest that Paul's spirituality in Phil 3:1-11 can function as an antidote to the internal pressure to adopt new theological interpretation in line with continual cultural change.

The cultural pressure that the Philippian Jesus-followers experienced came in the form of the ethnocentric-covenantalism propagated by the Judaizing opponents. Paul emphatically allays any fears or uncertainty which the Philippian Jesus-followers might have concerning the expectation which these opponents might create among them. The Philippian Jesus-followers have no need to conform to these external cultural expectations with their incessant insistence that circumcision is needed for gentile believers to become a part of God's family. The Philippian Jesus-followers are free from the pressure of having to live up to the cultural expectations of the Judaizing opponents. In the Christ-event, God has defeated all forms of power, including the power of culture to create relational dysfunction.

Finally, I suggested that the insights gained from Phil 3:1-11 regarding the effects of the Christ-event can serve as an antidote to the external pressure Christianity currently experiences in the form of having to provide solutions to the needs of the world by means of biblical conscience-formation. The implications of the Christ-event in the life of a Jesus-follower was presented as God enabling transformative participation in the life of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

God's family is characterised by their humility and faithfulness, that is, their desire to be transformed by sharing in the suffering of Christ, by being conformed to the death of Jesus, as well as to be resurrected from the dead themselves. Paul most probably wrote the letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers to encourage them to remain faithful to the example of humility that the life, suffering and death of Jesus presented to them. Our analysis of the argumentative texture of Phil 3:1-11 highlighted that Paul presents the solution to the challenges facing the Philippian Jesus-followers to be their own humility and faithfulness. In this regard, the text of 2:6-11, as the heart of Paul's letter to the Jesus-followers in Philippi, serves as the primary model of such dispositions which I have described as Paul's spirituality of weakness and vulnerability (Manjaly 2009:31).

Paul considers all of his earlier benefits as loss and excrement (3:8). His ultimate aim is to have knowledge (γνῶσις) of Christ (3:8), namely, to be found in him (3:9), to know the power of his resurrection (3:10), to know the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings (3:10), to become like him in his death (3:10), and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead (3:11). Joy, a word Paul uses sixteen times in the letter to the Philippians, characterizes this type of spirituality, since it takes its point of reference for every single experience in this life as the example of Christ in his life, suffering, death, and his resurrection in which believers now share through trust, fidelity, and loyalty to the faithfulness of Christ (3:9). In other words, φρόνησις leads Paul to the realization that his ultimate concern should be to mimic (μίμησις) the κένωσις (to empty oneself of power) of Christ (Paul poetically expresses this κένωσις of Christ in 2:5-11).

The hypothesis of my dissertation, in short, is that the results of Paul's careful consideration of his experience of the resurrected Jesus in light of scripture - as presented in Phil 3:1-11 - can function as an antidote to the current internal pressure which Christianity faces to adopt new theological interpretation in line with continual cultural change. In addition to relieving the internal pressure, I also suggest that the results of Paul's careful consideration of his experience of the resurrected Jesus in light of scripture - as presented in Phil 3:1-11 - can serve as an antidote to the

external pressure which Christianity faces of having to provide solutions to the needs of the world by means of biblical conscience-formation.

5. Methodology

Given my aim of studying the biblical text of Phil 3:1-11 in order to provide Christian spirituality with rootedness and direction, I will make use of two overarching methodological approaches to provide a clear structural framework for my research.

In formulating the problem statement, I indicated my concern regarding the irresponsible use of the biblical text in many instances when it is used as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. The first methodological approach aims to provide accountable and responsible hermeneutics and exegesis when the biblical text is used as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. I will do this through an exegetical study of the text of Phil 3:1-11 with the aim of appropriating the findings of the exegetical work to the current discussion on Christian spirituality. This dissertation aims to make a contribution within the field of New Testament studies. Since the best approach in deciding on a methodology is to choose a methodology which gets the job done (Downey 1997:Kindle locations 1572) I will start from the historical approach to the study of spirituality, since this approach will provide me with the proper setting and vantage point to make a study of a New Testament biblical text. Downey (1997:Kindle locations 1512-1526) refers to the historical approach's governing concern as an examination of documents or historical texts which recount the spiritual experience of those who have gone before us, whilst, in the same breath, warning against reducing Christian spiritual experience to that which is expressed in historical texts. Downey reminds the reader that the text provides only an account of spiritual experience. For the purposes of this study, our primary focus will be on Paul's Christian experience as articulated in the biblical text of 3:1-11.

The hegemony of the historical-critical method of biblical exegesis²³ is no longer tenable (Kourie 2011:132). De Villiers (2019b:1) views this focus on the historical interpretation of the Bible as remarkable, given how the earliest readers of the Bible viewed the interpretive process as incomplete without illuminating the spiritual meaning of biblical texts²⁴. Contemporary scriptural studies have witnessed a change of such magnitude in interpretive methods that it is difficult to keep up with current scholarship in this field (Kourie 2011:132). Within this paradigm shift, the importance of a spiritual reading of the text²⁵ has, once again, come to the fore (2011:132). Quoting Donahue, Kourie (2011:135) says, “of prime importance is the attempt to work between two poles, namely, ‘a reading of the biblical text that is faithful to its historical and literary context’ and ‘a realization that this is a sacred text, which leads to human transformation’”. Kourie (2011:148) argues that a return to our mystical roots and our mystical heritage will “open doors to a more translucent understanding of the ancient texts”. De Villiers (2019b:7), in turn, speaks of a “symbiotic relationship” between theology and history. De Villiers (2019b:9) argues for a synergy between the historical and theological readings of a biblical text which is “structured in the sense that the theological aspect by necessity accompanies, follows on or develops the historical aspects of a text.” Elsewhere De Villiers (2019a:3) eloquently sums up the approach of biblical spirituality as follows: “The comprehensive approach of biblical spirituality is ultimately a quest for re-enchanting the Bible as a book of beauty and as the living source of the spiritual journey by addressing some of the causes of the present malaise.”

Exegesis is an essential act if we want to deepen our grasp on the biblical foundations for our faithfulness. Exegesis as an act of love and sustained humility - a willingness to submit to the text: “spirituality without exegesis becomes self-indulgent” (Bowe 2003:Kindle locations 3553-3565). The

²³ Du Toit (2009:107) defines exegesis as the “art of attentively listening to the Bible and creatively transforming what has been said into what should be said today.”

²⁴ Perhaps this is what Bernard McGinn (2006:3) has in mind when he draws a sharp distinction between an academic understanding of a scriptural text, on the one hand, and penetrating to the living source of the biblical message, namely, to the Divine Word who speaks in and through human words and texts, on the other hand. He indicates that - for the mystic - the aim of reading the Bible is found in the latter.

²⁵ A well-known medieval fourfold exposition of Scripture was given as: literal (historical), allegorical (theological), tropological (moral) and anagogical (eschatological) (Kourie 2011:139).

ultimate aim of exegesis should be to produce in the lives of all Jesus-followers true spirituality “in which God’s people live in faithful fellowship both with one another and with the living God, and thus in keeping with God’s purposes in the world” (Fee 1998:75).

Exegetically, my approach to the text will be based on the socio-rhetorical criticism pioneered by Vernon K. Robbins. He defines this exegetical approach in the following way: “Socio-rhetorical criticism challenges interpreters to explore a text in a systematic, plentiful environment of interpretation and dialogue” (1996b:4). “Socio” refers to “the rich resources of modern anthropology and sociology that socio-rhetorical criticism brings to the interpretation of a text” (1996b:1). “Rhetorical” refers to “the way language in a text is a means of communication among people. Rhetorical analysis and interpretation give special attention to the subjects and topics a text uses to present thought, speech, stories and arguments” (1996b:1).

Socio-rhetorical criticism brings literary criticism, social-scientific criticism, rhetorical criticism, postmodern criticism, and theological criticism together into an integrated approach to interpretation (Robbins 1996b:2). According to Robbins (1996b:238) texts are made up of multiple textures. Socio-rhetorical criticism approaches the text as though it were a thickly textured tapestry (1996b:2). Socio-rhetorical criticism explores five different angles within texts (1996b:2). Robbins differentiates between inner texture and intertextuality (1996b:238) and from these two categories he identifies five textures, namely, inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture.

Inner texture refers to data that linguistic, literary, narratological, rhetorical, and aesthetic interpreters gather when they emphasize the relation of signs in a text to one another (Robbins 1996b:238). The result of this is six kinds of inner texture: repetitive; progressive; opening-middle-closing; narrational; argumentative; and sensory-aesthetic (1996b:238).

Alongside the analysis of inner texture, intertextuality gets sorted into four arenas of texture: intertexture; social and cultural texture; ideological texture; and sacred texture (Robbins 1996a:3).

Intertexture (1996b:40-70) refers to the relation of the text to other texts, oral, written, cultural, social, and historical. Social and cultural texture refers to the ways in which texts encourage readers “to adopt certain social and cultural locations and orientations rather than others” (1996b:72). Ideological texture (1996b:95) “concerns the biases, opinions, preferences, and stereotypes of a particular writer and a particular reader”. Sacred texture (1996a:4) refers to the manner in which a text communicates insights into the relationship between the human and the divine. This texture includes aspects concerning deity, holy persons, spirit beings, divine history, human redemption, human commitment, religious community and ethics.

Robbins (1996a:5) insists that the five textures need not all be applied to any given text. Special attention will, therefore, be given to three textures, namely, inner texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture during the exegetical process in this dissertation. My choice for these three textures is guided by two considerations. The first consideration is the motivation and aim of working towards greater methodological clarity regarding the study of Christian spirituality as an academic discipline in relation to - and as an important area of study within - biblical studies. The methodological choice for a preferential role for a literary and historical approach to the study of Christian spirituality necessitates a choice for the inner texture (given its focus on the linguistic, literary, narratological, rhetorical, and aesthetic signs in a text, as well as the way in which these signs relate to one other), the ideological texture (given the inner nature of multiple power plays at work in the discourse of a text), and the sacred texture (given its focus on the manner in which a text communicates insights into the relationship between the human and the divine) of the text of Phil 3:1-11. The second consideration is a practical one: the limited amount of space available in a dissertation necessitate a choice between these five textures²⁶.

²⁶ Even though I choose to primarily work in only these three textures, namely, inner texture, ideological texture and sacred texture, I will occasionally also focus on intertexture, as well as social and cultural texture when applicable. I am of the opinion that such an occasional focus on intertexture in Phil 3:1-11 can serve to better highlight the rhetorical and hermeneutical thrust of Paul’s argument in 3:1-11. Given the overlap which sometimes do occur between the five textures of Robbins, I am of the opinion that an occasional focus on intertexture and social and cultural texture can enrich the reading of 3:1-11.

The second and broader, or overarching methodological approach is a literature study of spirituality in its current form in order to highlight the fluidity involved in attempts to define spirituality and Christian spirituality. First, I will present an exploration of the art of biblical interpretation. A short analysis of hermeneutics is relevant in this chapter given my suggestion that the Bible is used irresponsibly in many instances when it is used as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. A well-developed insight into the dynamics involved in the art of hermeneutics is, in my opinion, an important aspect of the process of equipping the reader to use the Bible responsibly as the privileged text of Christian spirituality.

Second, a definition of Christian spirituality, as well as a description of the characteristics of Christian spirituality is presented. The definition and the characteristics of Christian spirituality will serve the purpose of providing a framework within which the relevance of a biblical hermeneutic for Christian spirituality can be fruitfully applied. Given the vast range of definitions of spirituality, brief appendices were added to reflect some of the developments in this regard.

Finally, I will attempt to present the relevance of Paul's compact, yet significant insights in Phil 3:1-11 for Christian spirituality. I will attempt to answer certain key questions regarding Paul's spirituality in 3:1-11: what are the key aspects of Christian spirituality which can be gathered from Paul's deep and thick description in 3:1-11? Is it possible for these insights into Paul's spirituality, as presented in 3:1-11, to make a contribution to the current discussion on Christian spirituality? What contributions does Paul's spirituality in 3:1-11 make to this discussion? How does Paul's spirituality in 3:1-11 influence the current discussion on Christian spirituality? These questions will guide our discussion in this section.

6. Chapter layout

In the current chapter, I present a general introduction to the dissertation. Motivation and aim, a problem statement, a hypothesis, a methodology, as well as chapter layout is presented here.

In chapter two I will present a socio-rhetorical reading of the inner texture of Phil 3:1-11. As already mentioned during my methodological layout earlier, I will make use of socio-rhetorical criticism as my exegetical approach of choice to the text of 3:1-11. I will focus on the repetitive-progressive texture, the opening-middle-closing texture, the narrational texture, the argumentative texture, as well as the sensory-aesthetic texture of 3:1-11.

In chapter three I will present a socio-rhetorical reading of the ideological texture and the sacred texture of Phil 3:1-11.

The main aim in chapter four is to address the problem statement given earlier: a very limited use of the biblical text as the privileged text of Christian spirituality; and an irresponsible use of the biblical text in many instances when it is used as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. I attempt to sort through the very dense and currently popular academic fields of spirituality and Christian spirituality in order to better grasp what Christian spirituality entails. I will discuss suggestions regarding the ways in which the findings from the exegetical study of Phil 3:1-11 can contribute to the study of Christian spirituality, both in showing the value of the Bible's role in spirituality, as well as taking a cue from how Paul's spirituality is reflected in Phil 3. I suggest that some traditional theological categories, namely, justification, adoption, and sanctification can be fruitfully brought into dialogue with the findings of the socio-rhetorical exegesis done in chapter two on 3:1-11.

In chapter five I will present a concluding summary of my investigation of the ways in which the exegetical findings of Phil 3:1-11 make a contribution to the current discussion on Christian spirituality.

Chapter two

A Socio-Rhetorical Reading of the Inner Texture of Philippians 3:1-11

1. Introduction

In formulating the problem statement, I indicated my concern regarding the irresponsible use of the biblical text in many instances when it is used as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. My exegetical approach in this chapter, as well as in the following chapter, aims to provide accountable and responsible hermeneutics when the biblical text is used as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. I will do this through an exegetical study of the text of Phil 3:1-11. My approach to the text will be based on the socio-rhetorical criticism pioneered by Vernon K. Robbins.

My choice for the socio-rhetorical approach in my study of Phil 3:1-11 and its relevance for Christian spirituality, is situated in three aspects. The first aspect can be found in the way in which the socio-rhetorical approach of Robbins does a close reading of the biblical text through its focus on the inner texture of the biblical text. The importance of the linguistic, literary, narratological, and the sensory-aesthetic aspects of a biblical text is of critical importance in exegesis. In addition, the socio-rhetorical approach of Robbins provides insight into the sacred texture of a biblical text. The sacred texture is presented by Robbins as an integral part of the texture of the biblical text. Robbins does not present the sacred texture as an addition to the biblical text or as an issue separate from the biblical

text. Given my focus on the biblical text as the privileged text of Christian spirituality, this approach by Robbins regarding the sacred texture of the text is beneficial for my investigation.

The second aspect can be found in the way in which Robbins's socio-rhetorical interpretation provides "a powerful interpretive analytic" to explore the "dialogic interrelations among authors, texts and readers/interpreters" (Gowler 2010:191). There is a complex correlation between a text and the contexts in which it is read and reread (2010:191). The different textures which Robbins presents in his socio-rhetorical approach is, of course, also present in other methodologies. The socio-rhetorical approach of Robbins, however, gathers and organizes "strategies and techniques of analysis and interpretation in a manner that no other interpretive approach ... follows from beginning to end" (1996b:45). The socio-rhetorical approach of Robbins provides the additional insight of the way in which a biblical text functions within its ancient, as well as its modern context.

The third aspect can be found in the way in which the socio-rhetorical approach uses "rhetorical theory for its principal of organization and application" (Robbins 1996b:45). A basic presupposition of rhetorical theory is that speaker, speech, and audience "are primary constituents of a situation of communication" (1996b:45). This threefold emphasis stands in contrast to a "singular focus characteristic of one or another literary method" (1996b:45). This rhetorical focus is important for Christian spirituality and the Bible, specifically the way in which the biblical text - as the privileged text of Christian spirituality - persuades the reader to adopt a certain approach to life. I am of the opinion that the socio-rhetorical approach by Robbins creates a synergy between a historical and a theological reading of the biblical text.

Socio-rhetorical criticism explores five different angles within texts (Robbins 1996a:2). Robbins differentiates between inner texture and intertextuality (1996b:238) and from these two categories he identifies five textures, namely, inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture.

Inner texture refers to data that linguistic, literary, narratological, rhetorical, and aesthetic interpreters gather when they emphasize the relation of signs in a text to one another (Robbins 1996b:238). The result of this is six kinds of inner texture: repetitive; progressive; opening-middle-closing; narrational; argumentative; and sensory-aesthetic (1996b:238). In this chapter a socio-rhetorical reading of the inner texture of Phil 3:1-11 will be presented.

Alongside the analysis of inner texture, intertextuality gets sorted into four arenas of texture: intertexture; social and cultural texture; ideological texture; and sacred texture (Robbins 1996a:3). Intertexture (1996a:40-70) refers to the relation of the text to other texts, oral, written, cultural, social, and historical. Social and cultural texture refers to the ways in which texts encourage readers “to adopt certain social and cultural locations and orientations rather than others” (1996a:72). Ideological texture “concerns the biases, opinions, preferences, and stereotypes of a particular writer and a particular reader” (1996a:95). Sacred texture (1996a:4) refers to the manner in which a text communicates insights into the relationship between the human and the divine. This texture includes aspects concerning deity, holy persons, spirit beings, divine history, human redemption, human commitment, religious community, and ethics.

Biblical texts deal with foundational religious beliefs, but they remain “straightforward specimens of linguistic communication” (Du Toit 2009:107). Responsible exegesis is a complex phenomenon which requires a multidimensional approach which makes use of all the relevant methods available (2009:109-110).

Robbins (1996a:5) insists that all five textures need not be applied to any given text when using socio-rhetorical interpretation. In my dissertation, and fitting to the topic, special attention will be given to three textures, namely, inner texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture during the exegetical process. In this chapter I will investigate the inner texture of Phil 3:1-11. In chapter three, I will investigate the ideological texture, as well as the sacred texture of 3:1-11. My choice for these three textures is guided by two considerations. The first consideration is the motivation and aim of

working towards greater methodological clarity regarding the study of Christian spirituality as an academic discipline in relation to - and as an important area of study within - biblical studies. The methodological choice for a preferential role for a literary and historical approach to the study of Christian spirituality necessitates a choice for the inner texture (given its focus on the linguistic, literary, narratological, rhetorical, and aesthetic signs in a text, as well as the way in which these signs relate to one other), the ideological texture (given the inner nature of multiple power plays at work in the discourse of a text), and the sacred texture (given its focus on the manner in which a text communicates insights into the relationship between the human and the divine) of the text of Phil 3:1-11. The second consideration is a practical one: the limited amount of space available in a dissertation necessitate a choice between these five textures.

I will begin my analysis of the text of Phil 3:1-11 by studying the inner texture in this chapter. This will be done by isolating the text itself (by situating the text within the broader macro structure of the letter to the Philippians) to create an environment for analysis and interpretation of the inner texture (Robbins 1996b:66). Socio-rhetorical criticism then uses six sets of strategies within the determined text to analyse and interpret inner texture. These six strategies are: 1) repetitive texture; 2) progressive texture; 3) opening-middle-closing texture; 4) narrational texture; 5) argumentative texture, and 6) sensory-aesthetic texture (1996b:66). My analysis of the inner texture will follow the order indicated here. Once I have established the inner texture in this chapter, I will analyse the ideological, and the sacred texture of 3:1-11 in chapter three.

2. Inner texture

Inner texture treats relationships among word-phrase and narrational patterns that produce argumentative and aesthetic patterns in texts (Robbins 1996b:46). These affiliated patterns are the context for the “networks of signification” in a text (1996b:46). Inner texture concerns the analysis

and interpretation of five kinds of inner textures in texts: 1) repetitive-progressive; 2) opening-middle-closing; 3) narrational; 4) argumentative; 5) aesthetic (1996b:46).

Explorations of repetitive-progressive textures in biblical texts, aim to answer certain very specific questions from the text itself. These questions include the following: what patterns emerge from the repetition of certain topics in the text? What topics replace other topics in the progression of the text? Is there continual repetition of the same word throughout the unit, or are there slight modifications at progressive stages? Does the progression bring certain kinds of words together but not others? Is there repetition that occurs in steps that create a context for a new word in the progression? (Robbins 1996b:50).

Opening-middle-closing texture concerns questions such as: what is the nature of the opening of a unit in relation to its closure, whether the unit is an entire text or a subdivision in it? What is the nature of the topics with which the text begins in relation to the topics with which it ends? What is the nature of the topics that replace the topics at the beginning? Is there repetition that interconnects the beginning, middle and end; or is the repetition of a particular kind limited to one or two of the three regions of the discourse? What is the function of the parts of a text in relation to the entire text? (Robbins 1996b:53).

Narrational texture concerns the voices through which the words in texts speak (Robbins 1996a:15). The narrator may begin and simply continue with narration; the narrator may introduce characters who act or characters who speak; the narrator may introduce written texts that speak (1996a:15). Since Philippians is an argumentative text, such discourse is of particular importance here.

Argumentative texture concerns the internal reasoning in the discourse as it moves from the beginning to the end (Robbins 1996b:88). Some of this reasoning is logical. In other words, assertions are given and supported with reasons, clarified through opposites and contraries, and possibly presents short or elaborate counterarguments. Other forms of reasoning might be qualitative. The

quality of the images and descriptions encourages the reader to accept the portrayal as true and real. This happens when analogies, examples, and citations of ancient testimony function in a persuasive manner (1996a:21).

Sensory-aesthetic texture concerns the range of senses the text evokes or embodies and the manner in which the text invokes or embodies them (Robbins 1996a:30-31).

I will analyse each of these textures in turn, with the understanding that there will be various levels on which the different textures overlap. This should not be seen as a repetition of the same content, but it should much rather be viewed as a confirmation of deep patterns that exists in the text of Phil 3:1-11. In what follows, an analysis of the repetitive-progressive texture in 3:1-11 is offered, with the aim to explore aspects of Christian spirituality in this passage²⁷.

2.1. Repetitive-progressive texture: repetition

2.1.1 Jesus, the Lord and Christ

Repetitive-progressive texture concerns the patterns that emerge from the repetition of certain topics in the text. One of the most striking features of Phil 3:1-11 is the frequent use of the terms “Lord”, “Christ Jesus”, “Christ”, as well as reference to Jesus through the use of several pronouns. All of these terms, of course, refers to one and the same person, namely, Jesus of Nazareth. The majority of Paul’s references to Jesus in 3:1-11 is clustered together in 3:7-10, where eleven of the thirteen references is made to Jesus - with a combined number of eight references coming in 3:8 and 3:10 alone - using different forms of address used for Jesus. One reference is found in 3:3, and another is found in 3:1. In total, therefore, Paul refers to Jesus no fewer than thirteen times in only eleven verses. Diagram 2 below indicates the different forms of address for Jesus, as well as the verses in

²⁷ It should be noted that, at times and for the sake of providing a deeper analysis of the text and acknowledging also the interwoven nature of textures and texts, other textures will be referenced as part of my inner-textual reading that follows. Such use of other textures will be indicated.

which each usage occurs. There can be no doubt, then, that Paul's primary subject in 3:1-11 is Jesus, the Lord and Christ²⁸.

I will now proceed by highlighting important literary and rhetorical aspects involved in the words that Paul uses to refer to Jesus in Phil 3:1-11, namely, κύριος, "Lord" (in 3:1 and 3:8), and Χριστός, "Christ" (in 3:3 and 3:7-9). This should serve the purpose of clarifying exactly what aspects of Jesus' life and ministry Paul has in mind when he repeats reference to them in 3:1-11²⁹.

Firstly, the "joy" (χαίρετε in 3:1) to which Paul calls the Philippian faithful, is "in the Lord" (ἐν κυρίῳ in 3:1). Paul also refers to κύριος in 3:8 where he says: τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου, "knowing Christ Jesus my Lord". The word κύριος communicates on at least two levels, namely, on a Greek/Roman imperialistic level and also on a Jewish messianic level. In the pagan world κύριος was used to refer to both a ruler or a god, specifically for Emperors in the Roman Empire who claimed divine honours (Hooker 2003a:50-51). The expressions "Jesus is Lord" and "Caesar is Lord" indicated conflicting loyalties by the end of the first century A.D., with proclamation of Christ as Lord seen as subversive (2003:51). Κύριος can also be translated as "Master" (Barclay 2020:305).

The meaning of the term κύριος can also be approached from the perspective of Jewish messianic expectation. Morna Hooker (2008:95) says that to call Jesus Lord is to give glory to God the Father - the two are synonymous. Kim (1984:106-109) correctly says that τοῦ κυρίου μου is Paul's acknowledgement of Jesus as the Messiah (1984:108). Joseph A. Fitzmeyer (1997:116) shows the connection between κύριος as a form of address and the Palestinian Semitic religious background of the word κύριος: "Κύριος originated in the post-Easter Jewish-Christian community of Palestine,

²⁸ In addition to Paul's reference to Jesus, he also refers to θεοῦ, "God" in 3:3, 9 and to οἱ πνεύματι, "the Spirit" in 3:3. Paul's reference to "God" and the "Spirit" confirms the deity (which includes Jesus himself) as of central importance to his argument in Phil 3:1-11.

²⁹ In this section I will also focus on social and cultural texture: "This arena differs from the arena of intertexture by its use of anthropological and sociological theory to explore the social and cultural nature of the voices in the text under investigation" (Robbins 1996b:144).

in which Jesus would have been hailed as ... מָלֵךְ. This would have been a title derived from one that Palestinian Jews already used for Yahweh.”

The resurrected Jesus is the κύριος that Paul refers to in Phil 3:1 and 3:8. God himself declared Jesus Lord by his resurrection from the dead (Rom 1:4). At the resurrection God enthroned Christ as the messianic king (Thiselton 2009:39-40). The basic idea is that God may have some such figure in this sort of role in the exercise of his creative and/or saving plan (Hurtado 2005:124). Through early Christian experience and reflection, the resurrected Jesus is seen as sharing in some of the devotional and cultic attention normally reserved for Israel's God. Powerful religious experiences of the early Jesus-followers in which Jesus was experienced as exalted to heavenly glory and legitimated by God himself as an object of their devotion, are prominent among the causes of this mutation in Jewish monotheism (2005:124).

Secondly, Paul uses the word Χριστός, “Christ” (in 3:3 and 3:7-9), to refer to Jesus in Phil 3:1-11. Χριστός is not a proper name, but it is a Greek translation of “Messiah”, the Hebrew word meaning “anointed”. The term or title was used in Jewish writings to refer to someone appointed by God to fulfil a particular task: sometimes it was applied to Israel's king, but it was also used of others who were chosen and used by God. The “Messiah” was selected by God to play a particular role in his plans for his chosen people Israel (Hooker 2003a:46).

From Paul's tautological use of the titles “Lord” and “Christ” for Jesus, Paul emphatically states what he believes the identity of Jesus is, namely, the resurrected Jesus, as the anointed King of Israel, is the true Ruler of the whole world. It is because of Jesus's faithfulness, and the Philippian's loyalty, fidelity and trust in Jesus, that they are made righteous (3:9). The Philippian Jesus-followers are, moreover, also adopted into the family of God because of the faithfulness of Jesus and their loyalty, fidelity and trust in Jesus. They are part of God's covenant, and can now be called God's children, namely, brothers and sisters of Paul (who, as a Jew, were a part of this family and covenant

by birth - see 3:5). They can be joyous because of this good news. This is why Paul commands them: “Furthermore, my family³⁰, rejoice in the Lord!” (3:1).

2.1.2. Ethnocentric covenantalism and achievements

Another striking feature of the discourse in Phil 3:1-11 is Paul’s use of terms referring to ethnocentric covenantalism³¹. Σάρξ, “flesh”, could be seen as the term which functions as a collective term in this regard. Paul uses the term three times in 3:1-11 (once in 3:3 and twice in 3:4). Paul also makes use of three other terms in 3:1-11 which has the same semantic range as σάρξ, namely, κατατομήν, “mutilate” (3:2), περιτομή, “circumcision” (in 3:3 and 3:5), and νόμος, “law” (in 3:5, 3:6, and 3:9). Diagram 3 below highlights all of these references, as well as the verses in which they occur. In total, Paul refers to an ethnocentric understanding of membership in the law on nine occasions in 3:1-11. Whatever this discourse is doing, it takes a very definite view of the law as its point of departure.

I will now proceed by highlighting important literary and rhetorical aspects involved in the words that Paul uses to refer to ethnocentric covenantalism in Phil 3:1-11. This should serve the purpose of clarifying what aspects of ethnocentric covenantalism Paul has in mind when he repeats reference to them in 3:1-11. I will discuss each of the phrases that Paul uses to refer to ethnocentric covenantalism in turn, namely, σάρξ, “flesh” (3:3 and twice in 3:4), κατατομήν, “mutilate” (3:2), περιτομή, “circumcision” (in 3:3 and 3:5), and νόμος, “law” (in 3:5, 3:6, and 3:9).

³⁰ I prefer to use a translation for ἀδελφοί that is gender-sensitive. I will, therefore, translate the term ἀδελφοί with the more inclusive term “family” in this dissertation. I am of the opinion that Paul’s use of the term (which should become clear from the investigation in this dissertation) seeks to convey an understanding of the term as “family”, rather than the more exclusive translation of “brothers”.

³¹ B.W. Longenecker (1990) coined this phrase in his Ph.D. written under the supervision of J.D.G. Dunn. Using Sander’s description of Early Judaism as “covenantal nomism”, Longenecker places an emphasis on the ethnocentric character of the covenant. This ethnocentric character of the covenant is retained throughout Jewish texts during the time of Early Judaism (Longenecker 1990:21-22). This term provides the best backdrop against which to read Phil 3:1-11, since Paul argues for the inherently flawed understanding of the covenant whenever membership in this covenant is based on ethnic background or personal achievements in the form of the ancestral traditions (see Phil 3:7-9).

N.T. Wright (2013:124) describes Paul’s critique in Phil 3:3 as aimed, “not at proto-Pelagianism or ‘moralism’ but at ethnocentric covenantalism.”

Firstly, Paul uses σάρξ to refer to ethnocentric covenantalism. Louw & Nida (1995:94) indicates the many different uses of σάρξ found in the New Testament. The word “flesh” can mean various things, depending on the context. It can mean physical “flesh” (Luk 24:39), “race” (Rom 11:14), “human beings” (Acts 2:17), “human nature” (Rom 8:3), “human standard” (1 Cor 1:26), etc. Σάρξ can be translated as flesh (as stripped of the skin), namely, (strictly) the meat of an animal (as food), or the body (as opposed to the soul [or spirit], or as the symbol of what is external, or as the means of kindred), or human nature, or a human being (Strong 2009:64). Schweizer (1964b:125-138) comments that σάρξ refers to a person’s whole earthly or physical existence. Sand (1990:231) indicates that σάρξ implies a theological understanding of human beings subject to the power of sin.

Louw & Nida (1995:94) believe, however, that Paul clearly uses the term σάρξ here in Phil 3:3 and 3:4 as a reference to the ceremonial observances of the law, based on Paul’s explanation of these observances in the following verses, with circumcision as the most typical example. Three dimensions of the meaning of σάρξ can be emphasized from 3:1-11. These three dimensions enables us to come to a better understanding of Paul’s view of the law in 3:1-11.

First, Paul uses the same argument in Phil 3:3 and 3:4 as in Gal 3:2-3. There are two ways of living, according to Paul: trusting in the flesh, or trusting in the Spirit. “Flesh” refers to the actual “flesh” cut away in circumcision, but at the same time it is the primary descriptive word of life before and outside of Christ. “Thus, as in that passage, ‘Spirit’ and ‘flesh’ stand juxtaposed as eschatological realities that describe existence in the overlap of the ages ... These are mutually incompatible kinds of existence” (Fee 1995:Kindle locations 8653-8658).

Second, based on the chiasmic structure in Phil 3:2-3, καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες is placed in direct contrast to the “mutilators” in 3:2, who places their confidence in the circumcision of the flesh (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2073-2074).

Third, καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες might refer to the same fundamental misunderstanding Paul had of God’s economy of salvation. Σαρκὶ refers to a standard of judging God’s desires for

oneself and the world that is, ultimately, contrary to God's desires and purposes (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2075-2077)³².

Σάρξ, in Phil 3:1-11, therefore, refers to a life outside of and apart from Christ; it refers to physical circumcision; and it also refers to a fundamental misunderstanding of God's economy of salvation.

Secondly, Paul uses κατατομήν, “mutilate”, in Phil 3:2 in reference to ethnocentric covenantalism. Τὴν κατατομήν, “cutting to pieces”, is an ironic wordplay (paranomasia) on the Greek word for “circumcision”, namely, περιτομή, “to cut around”. In the rest of this section I will focus on the intertexture, specifically on the cultural intertexture³³ in Phil 3:2.

Paul's use of κατατομήν, “mutilate”, in Phil 3:2 echoes³⁴ and refers³⁵ to a tradition of circumcision known to people in a specific culture. In this instance, there is an echo of Gen 17 and a reference to Lev 21. In Genesis 17 God gives circumcision as a sign of His covenant with Abram. God promises that Abram's descendants are included in this covenant. As a sign of being included in this covenant, Jewish boys had to be circumcised on the eighth day after birth. The cognate verb also appears in Lev 21:5 (LXX), where the priests are prohibited from cutting their own flesh in the way that pagan priests did.

Considering this wordplay, together with the fact that he begins his testimony in Phil 3:5 with this issue - and not with his tribe or his people - it appears that circumcision is the primary issue between Paul and these opponents. Phil 3:2, alongside Gal 5:12, where Paul urges the opponents to “castrate” themselves, is Paul's ultimate annulment of circumcision. Fredriksen (2020:39) argues that

³² See Hawthorne (2004:177).

³³ Cultural intertexture “concerns symbolic worlds that particular communities of discourse nurture with special nuances and emphases” (Robbins 1996b:115). In order for socio-rhetorical criticism to “open intertextual analysis at least to Greco-Roman as well as Jewish cultural intertexture in New Testament texts” analysis of “reference and echo” (1996b:110) in texts are featured.

³⁴ “Echo occurs when a word or phrase evokes, or potentially evokes, a cultural tradition” (Robbins 1996b:110).

³⁵ “Reference is the occurrence of a word, phrase or clause that refers to a personage or tradition known to people in a culture” (Robbins 1996b:110).

Paul's reference to circumcision in his so-called uncontested letters³⁶, was often a reference to proselyte circumcision³⁷: "Paul does not reject (proselyte) circumcision because he thought that pagans *should* not become Jews. Paul rejects such circumcision because he thought that pagans *could* not become Jews. Even when pagans receive circumcision, they are still pagans 'by nature'" (emphasis in original). For Paul, proselyte circumcision no longer has positive theological significance or importance - but it can have a negative one, "requiring those who submit to it to keep the whole Mosaic Law" (Witherington III 2011:190).

Thirdly, Paul uses περιτομή, "circumcision", to refer to ethnocentric covenantalism. Περιτομή is used twice in the passage of Phil 3:1-11: in 3:3 ἡμεῖς γὰρ ἔσμεν ἡ περιτομή, "for it is we who are the circumcision", and in 3:5 περιτομῇ ὀκταήμερος, "circumcised on the eighth day". Περιτομή can be defined as circumcised or circumcision. The term is a regular feature in Paul's writings, especially since, according to Paul, it was a very real threat to the ἐκκλησία across the Mediterranean urban context³⁸. Being held up as one of the primary markers of Torah observance, "Judaizers" were preaching a message of proselyte circumcision to many Jesus-followers. Paul argues, then, that this practice of circumcision is not necessary for gentile Jesus-followers to obtain membership in God's newly created family through the Spirit. Loyalty to and belief in Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, God's anointed one and Israel's true Messiah, and the world's true Lord and Ruler, is all that is needed for membership in this family (Ellsworth 2004:58).

According to Paul, gentiles could only be "eschatologically re-formatted" (Fredriksen 2020:41) through and by the Spirit (see Phil 3:3). In Rom 2:28-29 Paul states that the only true circumcision is that of the heart which is the work of the Spirit - in contrast to the physical event of circumcision only. The Jewish Jesus-followers in Jerusalem decided that the uncircumcised Jesus-

³⁶ These seven letters are: 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Philemon, and Romans. According to Fredriksen all of Paul's letters were "addressed to *ex-pagan* pagans of the Jesus movement" (2020:39) (emphasis in original).

³⁷ Fredriksen, in reference to Paul's letter to the Galatians, goes as far as to say, "of proselyte, that is, of gentile circumcision - the topic of this whole radioactively angry letter" (2020:41).

³⁸ "The communities to which Paul wrote his letters were all located in urban environments" (Ascough 2020:48). Only approximately ten percent of the total population of the Roman empire were city-dwellers (2020:48).

followers had to accept the physical sign of circumcision in order to be declared righteous and part of God's family, namely, "sons of Abraham." In Gal 5:6; 6:15 and Col 3:11 Paul, however, makes it clear that there is no longer a distinction between those circumcised and those uncircumcised in Christ.

Paul is not simply comparing a "true" Christian circumcision with a "false" Jewish circumcision³⁹. What Paul is saying here is that uncircumcised gentile Jesus-followers are already part of the covenant that God made with Abraham. There is nothing left to do for this to be true. No physical circumcision is required - what is required is circumcision of the heart (Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; 9:25; and Ezek 44:9) (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2051-2058)⁴⁰. The deepest sense of this notion is thus the identification of the people of God. Paul indicates that all Jesus-followers - whether circumcised or not circumcised - are part of God's people. This is the nature of Israel (Fee 1995:Kindle locations 8613-8616).

Fourthly, Paul uses νόμος, "law" (in Phil 3:5, 3:6, and 3:9), to refer to ethnocentric covenantalism. Νόμος occurs 195 times in the New Testament. Of that number 118 are in Paul (27 in Rom, 32 in Gal, the rest in 1 Cor and Phil) (Hübner 1990:472-473). The law has its basis in the covenant which God made with Abraham in Gen 17. Even though νόμος is used here in Phil 3:5 without the definite article, it is most probably a reference to the law of Moses, for Paul tends to omit the article with νόμος, perhaps as a reflection of the Jewish tendency to treat the corresponding Hebrew תּוֹרָה almost as a proper noun (when the law of Moses is meant) and therefore not needing the article (O'Brien 1991:372). The laws have their place in the doctrine of the covenant. Yahweh

³⁹ Fredriksen (2020:40) emphasizes that Jewish circumcision, for Paul, was still important. She provides several reasons as to why she believes this to be the case: 1) circumcision is one of God's commands to Israel (Gen 17:14); 2) in Phil 3:4 Paul presents his own circumcision as something that he thinks highly of; 3) in Rom 3:1-2 Paul refers to the value of Jewish circumcision as "much in every way".

⁴⁰ Wright (2005:Kindle locations 1713-1715) gives even further clarity about the "we" by using family-language: "This passage integrates closely with the more-developed statements of 'justification by faith' rather than by 'the works of the law,' as in Romans and Galatians. It strengthens the argument for seeing justification not simply as a truth about how sinners get saved but also as a truth about how Jews and Gentiles come together in a single family." This also clarifies why Paul calls the Philippian Jesus-followers ἀδελφοί μου in verse 1 (see also Hawthorne 2004:175 and Anders 1999:243).

Fowl's reference to Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; 9:25; and Ezek 44:9 is another instance of cultural intertexture (echo) that is present in Paul's use of κατατομήν, "mutilate", in Phil 3:2.

has chosen Israel as His people, and Israel has acknowledged Yahweh as their God. This fundamental Old Testament principle is the direct basis of these laws. They express the claim of Yahweh to dominion over the whole life of this people which belongs to Him in virtue of His election. The first commandment of the Decalogue expresses this with full clarity.

From Paul's use of four separate terms, namely, σάρξ, κατατομήν, περιτομή, and νόμος - all with a semantic range which refers to ethnocentric covenantalism - it becomes clear to the reader that Paul's primary issue with the opponents in Phil 3:2 is, most likely, ceremonial observances of the law of Moses of which circumcision is the most typical example. In the context of Paul's argument in 3:1-11, these ceremonial observances refer to a life before and outside of Christ, as well as a fundamental misunderstanding of God's economy of salvation.

2.1.3. Financial accounting terminology

A final feature which is striking in Phil 3:1-11, is the way in which Paul uses financial accounting terms to portray the progression in his thoughts regarding that which is of value and that which is not⁴¹. According to "God's audit in Christ", all things which were previously seen as profit, namely, σάρξ, "flesh", περιτομή, "circumcision", and νόμος, "law", now counts as loss (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2116-2117).

Paul uses two terms from financial accounting to evaluate the two realities - Jesus and ethnocentric covenantalism - which command his primary attention in this passage, namely, κέρδος, "profit" and ζημία, "loss". Diagram 4 provides a summary of Paul's use of these two terms. Paul refers to κέρδος, "profit", twice (v.7 and v.8), and he refers to ζημία, "loss", three times (v.7 and twice in v.8). These terms from financial accounting are, therefore, used five times in Phil 3:1-11.

⁴¹ See O'Brien (1991:382, 385).

I will now emphasize certain important rhetorical and literary aspects in Paul's use of these terms from financial accounting, which should assist us in our understanding of Paul's focus in using these terms. Firstly, Paul found that he had to make room in his life and thoughts for a crucified Messiah that God had raised from the dead. This meant that Paul had to rethink his ideas about God and his relationship with God (Hooker 2006:23)⁴². The verb ἡγεῖσθαι means "to think, consider, regard", and the perfect tense that Paul uses in Phil 3:7, ἥγημαι, "I count," implies that he has come to a final decision only after considering matters with deliberate judgment (Hawthorne 2004:188).

According to Phil 3:4b-6, Paul's problem was not that he could not make the grade; it was that he made it, only to find out that he was using the wrong standard of measurement (Ben Witherington III 2011:201). The advantages that Paul previously believed was his - based on the list of his heritage and achievements in 3:5-6 - is not simply seen to be a liability. Paul views it as a disadvantage (ζημία) (Stumpff 1964:888)⁴³. Paul does not wish to renounce his heritage and achievements, but he does renounce them as grounds for boasting (Fee 1995:Kindle locations 9211-9214)⁴⁴.

The one element without parallel in Phil 3:7, is διὰ τὸν Χριστόν, "because of Christ". This phrase occurs only in the second clause, and it is the decisive difference for Paul between his views in the past and his views in the present (O'Brien 1991:383). In order to perceive the difference between a liability and an asset, Paul had to form the habit of viewing things from a perspective in Christ; this is not a self-evident reality (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2118-2123)⁴⁵.

⁴² See also Marrow (1986:186).

⁴³ See also Moule (1975:164) and Lenski (1961:835).

⁴⁴ Is Paul referring to his "conversion" experience on the road to Damascus (see Acts 9) in Phil 3:7? O'Brien (1991:384) (see also Martin 1987:153) is of the opinion that he is. Since ἥγημαι is a perfect, either middle or passive, indicative, first person, singular verb; of the root form ἡγέομαι "to consider", this proposal makes lot of sense. The function of the perfect form of the verb is precisely the implications in the present because of a past action or event, i.e. Paul's encounter with the living Christ on the road to Damascus (Heiser 2005:In Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology). In response to this, it has been suggested that the aorist tense ἥγησάμην would have provided a clearer reference to the Damascus road experience (O'Brien 1991:384).

⁴⁵ See also Bruce (1989:112).

Paul's logical argument in Phil 3:7 can, therefore, be presented in the following manner: I now consider all these things that were to my profit and in which I could boast, as a disadvantage, because of the Anointed One.

Secondly, in the use of κέρδος, "profit", and ζημία, "loss", in Phil 3:8 Paul says, ἀλλὰ μενοῦνγε καὶ ἡγοῦμαι πάντα ζημίαν εἶναι διὰ τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου, δι' ὃν τὰ πάντα ἐζημιώθην, καὶ ἡγοῦμαι σκύβαλα, ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω, "What is more, I continue to consider everything a *loss* compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, *for whose sake I have lost all things*. I consider them excrement that I may *gain* Christ." (emphasis my own).

Is Paul here indicating his willingness to suffer the loss of all things previously seen as profitable (passive), or is this sentence better read as Paul's choice in choosing Christ over and above all these things (active/medium)? The verb he uses here, ἐζημιώθην is an aorist, passive, indicative, "to suffer loss." Considering the context of this sentence, however, it would fit better within the flow of the text to translate the term in such a way as to ascribe this action to Paul himself (O'Brien 1991:389)⁴⁶. Therefore, "for whose sake I have lost all things."

The use of the aorist subjunctive, κερδήσω, indicates Paul's awareness that this "gaining of Christ" is not something which is done once and for all. Paul is aware that he will only fully gain Christ on "the day of Christ" (see Phil 3:10&12). "Gaining Christ" is best understood in terms of a relationship with Christ as Lord, and thus is akin to the personal knowledge of Christ already referred to in the expression γινῶσις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. To gain Christ and to know him are then two ways of expressing the same ambition (O'Brien 1991:391)⁴⁷.

Paul's logical argumentation in Phil 3:8 can, therefore, be presented in the following manner: What is more, I continue to consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of

⁴⁶ See also Lenski (1961:837); Moule (1975:165); Louw & Nida (1995:101); Hawthorne (2004:192).

⁴⁷ See Bruce (1989:113).

knowing Jesus my Messiah-King, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them excrement that I may gain the Messiah.

<u>Verse numbers</u>	<u>“Lord”</u>	<u>“Christ Jesus”</u>	<u>“Christ”</u>	<u>Personal pronouns</u>
3:1	κυρίῳ, “Lord”			
3:3		Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, “Christ Jesus”		
3:7			τὸν Χριστὸν, “Christ”	
3:8	τοῦ κυρίου, “Lord”	Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, “Christ Jesus”	Χριστὸν, “Christ”	δι’ ὃν, “because of whom”
3:9			Χριστοῦ, “Christ”	ἐν αὐτῷ, “in Him”
3:10				αὐτὸν, “Him” τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ, “His resurrection”

				[τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ, “His suffering” τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ, “His death”
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Diagram 2: Paul’s references to Jesus in Phil 3:1-11

Since Paul refers to Jesus on thirteen occasions in Phil 3:1-11, there can be no doubt that Jesus, as Lord and Christ, is the primary subject in these eleven verses. Paul repeatedly emphasizes the messianic and royal nature of the resurrected Jesus’ identity in 3:1-11.

<u>Verse numbers</u>	<u>“Mutilate”</u>	<u>“Circumcision”</u>	<u>“Flesh”</u>	<u>“law”</u>
3:2	κατατομήν, “mutilate”			
3:3		περιτομή, “circumcision”	σαρκί, “flesh”	
3:4			σαρκί, “flesh” (twice)	
3:5		περιτομή, “circumcision”		νόμον, “law”
3:6				νόμῳ, “law”

3:9				νόμου, “law”
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Diagram 3: Paul’s use of terms referring to ethnocentric covenantalism and achievements in Phil

3:1-11

Paul’s emphasis - on nine occasions in Phil 3:1-11 - on an ethnocentric understanding of membership in the covenant confirms that Paul’s point of departure in these eleven verses is a very definite view of the law. Paul uses four different terms for ethnocentric covenantalism, namely, σάρξ, “flesh” (once in 3:3 and twice in 3:4), κατατομήν, “mutilate” (3:2), περιτομή, “circumcision” (in 3:3 and 3:5), and νόμος, “law” (in 3:5, 3:6, and 3:9). It can be said that Paul presents these ceremonial observances of the law as an example of what a life before and apart from Christ looks like. Circumcision is the primary example of this and boasting in the flesh indicates a fundamental misunderstanding of God’s economy of salvation.

<u>Verse numbers</u>	<u>“Profit”</u>	<u>“Loss”</u>
3:7	κέρδη, “profit”	ζημίαν, “loss”
3:8	κέρδη, “gain”	ζημίαν, “loss” ἐζημιώθην, “I have lost”

Diagram 4: Paul’s use of terms from financial accounting in Phil 3:1-11

Paul uses two terms from financial accounting on five occasions in Phil 3:1-11 in order to evaluate the two primary subjects of these eleven verses, namely, Jesus and ethnocentric covenantalism. Through Paul’s use of the terms κέρδος, “profit”, and ζημία, “loss”, he succinctly presents his beliefs regarding the value of Jesus when set against the ceremonial practices of ethnocentric covenantalism. For Paul, ethnocentric covenantalism - something which he previously

viewed as an advantage - is a disadvantage; it is something which he has lost for the sake of Christ, in order to gain the Messiah/the Anointed One.

In summary, Paul's noticeable repetitive reference to three distinct aspects in Phil 3:1-11 are, firstly, to Jesus, the Lord and Christ (thirteen times); secondly, to ethnocentric covenantalism and achievements (nine times); and thirdly, to terms of financial accounting (five times). From these three repetitive sequences we can more clearly understand Paul's primary agenda in 3:1-11. In short, I suggest that Paul says that ethnocentric covenantalism is replaced by Christ-centric covenantalism. I will now discuss the progression of Paul's thought in 3:1-11.

2.2. Repetitive-progressive texture: progression

Paul's descriptions in Phil 3:1-11 are multi-layered and progressive in nature. As will be seen in the description below, Paul uses a wide variety of terms to describe various dimensions of a specific issue. This provides the reader with multiple perspectives on certain issues, creating a multi-layered text filled with thick and deep meaning. My focus will be on three core phrases and words in this section, namely, "watch out", "I have more" and "what is more".

2.2.1. "Watch out"

In Phil 3:2 there is a progression in Paul's description of his opponents. As from 3:2, "Paul's rhetoric is ferocious" (Segal 1990:140). He describes these opponents in three different ways: Βλέπετε τοὺς κύνας, βλέπετε τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας, βλέπετε τὴν κατατομήν, "Watch out for those dogs, watch out for those who do evil, watch out for those mutilators." This is a form of rhetorical amplification (Witherington III 2011:189). Paul's critical description of the Judaizers intensifies with each description. Paul shifts from the people ("dogs" and "evil workers") to the activity ("mutilation") and highlights the emphatic "for we are the circumcision" (v. 3) (Fee 1995:Kindle locations 8575-

8582). Paul indicates that the opponent's approach to and understanding of circumcision is skewed. Their work is evil and they are "mutilators" (Hawthorne 2004:174-175). In diagram 5 this progression in Paul's warning is indicated.

Certain rhetorical and literary aspects involved in Paul's description of these opponents, provide the reader with important insights into Paul's thinking in Phil 3:1-11. Firstly, Philippians is a letter of joy (Joubert 2012:381). The leading thought of the letter is "joy" and "gratitude" (Müller 1955:21). A reference to joy can be found sixteen times in this letter which Paul writes from prison (Fee 1995:Kindle locations 11602)⁴⁸.

Much has been made, therefore - in light of this atmosphere of joy which especially characterizes Phil 1 & 2 - of the change in tone found in 3:2. How can Paul's use of ferocious rhetoric from 3:2 be explained? Is there a central idea or a logical argument which explains this sudden change? To further complicate matters in this regard, Paul's use of τὸ λοιπόν, which can be translated as "furthermore" in 3:1, has led certain scholars⁴⁹ to believe that Paul is bringing his letter to the Jesus-followers in Philippi to an end, and that 3:2-4:23 is thus a separate document inserted into Paul's original writing. The presence of τὸ λοιπόν, therefore, immediately raises questions about the unity of the letter. A clear position on this matter is needed, since the issue of the unity of the letter is of great importance to the theme of eschatology in Philippians (Peerbolte 2011:270).

The reasons for doubting the unity of the letter are diverse and considerable, but it is safe to say that none of them are convincing (Hawthorne 2004:xxx-xxxi & xxxii-xxxiii). Many scholars believe in the unity of the letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers, based on a literary analysis of the

⁴⁸ Phil 1:3-5; 18-19; 25; 2:1-2; 17-18; 28-29; 3:1; 4:1; 4; 10. See Hawthorne (2004:173) and Heil (2010:1).

⁴⁹ During the 1960's, especially in Germany, a consensus developed in New Testament scholarship that viewed the canonical letter of Paul to the Philippian Jesus-followers as a compilation of fragments of originally separate letters (Sellew 1994:17-28).

rhetorical functioning of τὸ λοιπόν⁵⁰. Furthermore, there is no evidence “that ancient editors of letter collections actually did this, inserting one piece of one letter inside another” (Campbell 2020:122).

Fee (1995:Kindle locations 8747-8748) states: “It should be noted that the vocative occurs in every instance of (τὸ) λοιπόν used as a transitional (or concluding) adverb; cf. 4:8 below and 2 Cor 13:11.” Τὸ λοιπόν, therefore, can be said to indicate a transitional moment in Paul’s letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers. Fee (1995:Kindle locations 8513-8515) believes τὸ λοιπόν in Phil 3:1 means exactly the same as what it means in 1 Thess 4:1 and 2 Thess 3:1, “‘as for the rest,’ meaning ‘as for what remains to be said.’”

Silva (2005:13-14) reminds the reader that the letter can, ultimately, be understood only in the form in which it has come down to us. The main focus should be to make sense of the text in the context in which it is found, and not on the basis of a setting which is no longer in existence⁵¹. Based on this, it is safe to conclude that the text, as we have it in its current form, highlights the unity of the letter, and τὸ λοιπόν need not be seen as an indication of a literary seam between different letter parts joined together at a later time.

Paul’s rhetorical strategy in Phil 3:1-3 can be described as “repeating his warning against the Judaizers” (Snyman 2006:269). Paul’s tone in 3:1 is consistent with his attack on the “enemies of the cross” in 3:18-19 (O’Brien 1991:347), and the links between 2:29 and 3:1-2 moderates the tone of 3:2, explaining the transition from Paul’s recognition of his colleagues to his critical hostility and his self-evaluation in chapter 3 (Hawthorne 2004:171). In the letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers the apostle Paul - writing from a prison - holds up joy as something which is available to those who accepts his message, and something which is not determined by or dependent upon one’s circumstances (Bloomquist 2007:274-275). The Philippian Jesus-followers are able to “rejoice in the Lord” not because these Jesus-followers are ignorant of the opponents, the challenges and the dangers

⁵⁰ See Bockmuehl (1998:177), O’Brien (1991:348), Fee (1995:Kindle locations 8481-8483), and Wright (2009:Kindle locations 2305-2308).

⁵¹ See also Joubert (2012:382) for a similar view regarding interpretive focus.

that they face. Their joy can be found and experienced precisely in the midst of all the dangers and challenges within the congregation and those surrounding them; it is possible to rejoice in the Lord, despite their circumstances - because of what God had done, is doing and will complete in Christ (O'Brien 1991:349). Paul's command in 3:1, χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ, "Rejoice in the Lord!", therefore, forms part of a central theme in the letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers⁵² and it also sets the atmosphere in which they should receive Paul's comments and new subject matter in the following section (1995:Kindle locations 8488-8489).

In Phil 3:1b Paul continues: χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ. τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐκ ὀκνηρόν, ὑμῖν δὲ ἀσφαλές, "it is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again". Phil 3:1b is quite enigmatic, and one cannot be certain about its meaning (Hawthorne 2004:173). Malherbe (Cousar 2001:166) has pointed out that a standard feature of exhortation in friendly letters⁵³ was the assurance to the readers that they are receiving nothing original. What they were receiving was traditional and time-tested counsel (2001:166). By repeating these things Paul thus arouses attention and jogs the memory to recall important lessons from the past. Paul's call to examine these enemies rather than to follow them sparks interest with his readers and sets the stage for the positive picture he paints of the Jesus-following community (2001:166-167). What is of importance for the commentator, is to determine what Paul is referring to when he says "it is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again" (τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐκ ὀκνηρόν), as well as whether Paul's previous communication on this topic was verbal or written, or both⁵⁴.

⁵² Paul uses certain stylistic techniques in order to emphasize the theme of joy in his letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers (Nell 1986:94-102).

⁵³ Louw & Nida (1995:vi-viii) notes that Paul's letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers is an intensely personal and informal letter. In the letter Paul allows his personal feelings to be known and he places great emphasis on the corporate nature of the community of Jesus-followers.

⁵⁴ Melick (1991:126) believes that any choice between previous oral or written communication on Paul's behalf with regards to the Jewish opponents would do no harm to the meaning of the text.

In the following section I will focus on the historical intertexture⁵⁵ of Phil 3:1. Some scholars take Phil 3:1b as a reference to previous written communication between Paul and the Philippian Jesus-followers⁵⁶ (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2011). There are, however, good reasons to believe otherwise. The form of the Greek indicates that Paul is in some way, apologizing for repeating himself here (2005:Kindle locations 2011-2012).

Fowl (2005:Kindle locations 2012-2013), Jamieson (1997:365) and Bockmuehl (1998:182) believes the phrase “to write the same things” refers to Paul’s command “Rejoice!” earlier in Phil 3:1. Since Paul has repeatedly discussed this topic earlier in the epistle (see Phil 1:3-5; 18-19; 25; 2:1-2; 17-18; 28-29), Paul has no hesitation in again calling the Philippian Jesus-followers to rejoice in the Lord.

Fee (1995:Kindle locations 8538-8544) lists three very strong arguments against an interpretation of the meaning of τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐκ ὀκνηρόν, “it is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again”, which links χαίρετε with the phrase τὰ αὐτὰ. Firstly, it is highly unlikely that τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐκ ὀκνηρόν refers to “rejoice in the Lord”, since τὰ αὐτὰ, “the same things”, is plural, not singular, which would be the natural expression if he intended to point to the preceding imperative. Secondly, this view disregards the asyndeton (Phil 3:5-6), which is especially unusual if it were Paul’s intent to refer to χαίρετε with the phrase τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐκ ὀκνηρόν. Lastly, one can imagine any number of adjectives that might serve as reasons for him to repeat the imperative to rejoice, but ὑμῖν δὲ ἀσφαλές, “it is a safeguard for you” is not one of them. Ὑμῖν δὲ ἀσφαλές does, however, fit perfectly with the warning and exhortation that follows in 3:2.

⁵⁵ Historical intertexture “‘textualizes past experience into ‘a particular event’ or ‘a particular period of time’” (Robbins 1996b:118).

⁵⁶ Campbell (2020) suggests that Paul, in Phil 3:2-4:4, is quoting from a previous letter he had written to the Philippian Jesus-followers. In this regard, he cites Polycarp’s knowledge of more than one letter which Paul sent to the Philippian Jesus-followers (2020:122).

Instead, O'Brien (1991:347-348) indicates that Paul is here referring to previous verbal correspondence he had with them whilst he was with them in Philippi. In Phil 3:2 Paul warns the Philippian Jesus-followers about false teaching and ungodly examples. These are matters he had previously referred to while ministering among them (1991:347-348). He has no problem raising these same issues again, since it is a safeguard for them.

Taking all of these possibilities into consideration, I suggest that Paul here, most likely, refers to previous verbal correspondence on the topic that follows in Phil 3:2-4:20⁵⁷, as well as to already addressing these issues earlier in his letter. This includes his reference to rejoicing in 3:1 (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2012-2013), as well as the danger involved in the message of the Judaizers⁵⁸.

Through this repetition Paul is “attempting to exploit a political *topos*” (emphasis in original) (Williams 2002:149) with his usage of the term ἀσφαλές in Phil 3:1⁵⁹. There is a definite connection between the usage of the term here and Paul's usage of πολίτευμα in 3:20 (and also in 1:27). The safety of the city was frequently used as a *topos* in political rhetoric. Paul hopes to protect the Philippian Jesus-followers from the teaching of the opponents who claimed that it would be to their benefit to adopt the religious privileges of Israel, in addition to their faithfulness as Jesus-followers. Paul is concerned for their safety as citizens of the “heavenly” commonwealth (πολίτευμα) (2002:151). Paul, now, leads his readers into a new section of the letter which will take them all the way to near the end of the letter in 4:20, and which will help them to remain “steadfast” (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2014-2015).

Paul's logical argument in Phil 3:1 can be presented in the following manner: for what remains to be said, my family, make Jesus, the King, the source and the object of your joy! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again (things regarding what constitutes membership in God's

⁵⁷ This might include oral discussion of the topic from Timothy and Epaphroditus (Jewett 1970:383).

⁵⁸ See, e.g., Phil 1:28; 2:15. Jewett (1970:384) goes as far as to identify three different groups of opponents in Paul's letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers: divine-men (2:12 ff.) and libertines (3:17 ff.), together with Jewish-Christian missionaries (3:2 ff.).

⁵⁹ This is an example of social and cultural texture in Phil 3:1.

covenant and the joy that comes with it - I have discussed it with you previously and I have referred to this earlier in the letter, and I will refer to it in what is to follow here), since this keeps you safe as citizens of the heavenly commonwealth.

Once Paul has prepared the thoughts of his readers in this way, it is a natural progression from there into the repetitive warning which follows in Phil 3:2.

Secondly, in Phil 3:2 we find the imperative βλέπετε, “watch out!”, three times in quick succession (anaphora). Hawthorne (2004:171-172) indicates the literary artistry which Paul implements in describing to the Philippian Jesus-followers what type of danger these opponents pose: “Paul gives rhetorical expression to the very deep concern he has about the seriousness of the problem that face his friends” (2004:173). Paul uses six different types of figure of speech in 3:2, namely, anaphora⁶⁰, paronomasia⁶¹, polysyndeton⁶², alliteration⁶³, short disjointed cola⁶⁴ and chiasm⁶⁵. Paul is hesitant in using the clever techniques of the sophists (see 1 Cor 2), but he is quite able to do so as can be seen from his literary artistry on display in 3:2 (2004:172).

Paul uses three terms to refer to the group of people that he warns the Philippian Jesus-followers against, namely, τοὺς κύνας (“dogs”), τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας (“men who do evil”), and τὴν κατατομήν (“mutilators of the flesh”). Paul is referring to the characteristics of one group (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2020-2021). Determining the precise identity of this group that Paul refers to, however, requires strenuous effort. Hawthorne (2004:liii-lv) puts forward the possibilities with regards to the identity of the false teachers in Philippi, namely, non-Christian Jewish missionaries (based on δικαιοσύνην in Phil 3:5-9), Gnostic Christian missionaries (based on the concept of “perfection” in 3:12-16), Jewish Christian missionaries, or non-Jewish Christian missionaries.

⁶⁰ Anaphora refers to the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses.

⁶¹ Paronomasia is a play on words or a pun, related to sound imitation.

⁶² Polysyndeton refers to the repetition of the same conjunction in close succession.

⁶³ Alliteration is the occurrence of the same letter at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words.

⁶⁴ Short disjointed cola refers to sentences of approximately the same length here.

⁶⁵ Chiasm is a reversal of grammatical structures in successive phrases or clauses - but typically no repetition of words.

The phrase τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας, “those who do evil”, does not assist us in concluding what the identity of these opponents were. Τοὺς κύνας (“dogs”), however, does provide us with some insight. The social and cultural texture of Phil 3:2 can assist us in identifying these opponents. Dogs were considered unclean in first century Greco-Roman society. The term was often used to describe gentiles, as well as unclean Jews (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2021-2022). Paul takes the term and turns it on the very people who coined it (Hawthorne 2004:174). Jews made use of dogs to watch over their homes and guard their flocks, therefore, Paul most probably here refers to the packs of “hungry wild dogs wandering about. They were designated as unclean in the Jewish dietary law” (Marshall 2014:111)⁶⁶.

Combining what we know about τοὺς κύνας with Paul’s use of τὴν κατατομήν - which most likely refers to proselyte circumcision - in Phil 3:2, I believe the Jewish identity of this group of opponents is placed beyond doubt⁶⁷. The opponents can be understood to be Jewish Jesus-followers who were using their identity badges in order to prove their Jewishness and promised an immediate salvation with its consequence of ethical indifference and a claim to “perfection” now, based on a realized eschatology (Hawthorne 2004:lv).

Thirdly, is Paul launching a direct attack on specific individuals or a specific group currently living in or passing through Philippi, or is this a more general reference to the dangers involved with the theology and practices of a group such as this? Is Paul doing the same thing in the same way as he does, say in Gal 3:6-4:31 or in 2 Cor 11:13-15? I believe Paul does the same thing in Phil 3:2, but the direct threat of this group is not as real as in Galatians and in Corinthians (Fowl 2005:Kindle

⁶⁶ See also Jewett 1970:385-386 & Brawley 2010:145-146 for an analysis of ‘dogs’. Witherington III (2011:189), in contrast to Marshall, sees these dogs as guard dogs defending “Jewish orthopraxy.”

Mark Nanos (2009) argues against an interpretation of “dogs” here as referring to Judaizing missionaries. For a description on Paul’s use of the tradition of Jesus’ word about not giving the children’s bread to dogs, see Hanson (1987:79-97).

Grayston (1986:172) says the opponents are gentile semi-gnostic activists who adopted circumcision and were now forcing it on others.

⁶⁷ See Silva (2005:147), O’Brien (1991:365) and Fowl (2005:Kindle locations 2031-2035).

locations 2035-2036)⁶⁸. Despite the intense nature of the danger which the content of these opponents poses, this is not an impending danger (Cousar 2001:167). Whenever the verb βλέπετε is followed by an accusative direct object (as is the case in Phil 3:2), the verb does not carry the sense of impending danger (see 1 Cor 1:26; 10:18; 2 Cor 10:7) (2001:167). Paul, rather, wants to warn his readers about the clash which the identity of these opponents creates with the identity of the church (2001:167).

“Some have seen the protasis of this sentence as indicating the presence of Judaizers among them” (Fee 1995:Kindle locations 8983). Countering this possibility, Fee (1995:Kindle locations 9080-9083) notes that this same formula occurs at key points in 1 Cor (3: 18; 8: 2; 14: 37), where it points not to outsiders but to people within the Corinthian congregation who have taken the stance proposed in the protasis. It is extremely doubtful that outsiders are being addressed here - given the rest of Philippians. I side with Fee on this point, whilst, at the same time admitting that very little of Paul’s content is determined by the location of the opponents he addresses here.

But, if the danger is not an impending danger, why does Paul use such strong rhetoric in Phil 3:2? Paul uses this group as an example of the type of behaviour which the Jesus-followers in Philippi should avoid. The danger which these opponents pose is no less real just because the danger is not pressing. The Philippian ἁγίοις, “saints” (1:1), were followers of a *Kyrios* who had been executed as a state criminal. Their fellow Roman citizens caused them suffering because of this, and, by embracing the outward expressions of Jewish identity they could, perhaps, ward off some of the opposition (Fee 1995:Kindle locations 8501-8503). It is important, moreover, to emphasize the pressure that these opponents would have placed on the gentile Philippian Jesus-followers to be circumcised from a Jewish perspective as well. Circumcision, according to these Judaizers, would be a sign of covenant membership for the Philippian Jesus-followers. Without it, the Judaizers would have argued, these Philippians could not be a part of God’s family, nor could they be called righteous. Paul criticized the works of the law in only two situations, namely, when the works of the law was

⁶⁸ See Peterlin (1995:81) for an analysis on why these specific warnings are not directed at individuals within the Philippian congregation, but rather at opponents who do not form a part of the congregation.

applied as “a condition of salvation” or, when it was used as a “means to erect a barrier.” It is for these very same reasons that Paul most likely criticizes the works of the law in 3:1-11. In other situations, Paul did not criticize it, even though he refers to its inferiority and its temporal quality (Suh 2003:74).

Paul makes use of these opponents as the sort of stock character whose behaviour the Philippian Jesus-followers should avoid in contrast to the behaviour of Timothy and Epaphroditus (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2036-2038). Furthermore, despite Paul’s ferocious rhetoric his aim in Phil 3:2 is not to denigrate his opponents (whether they be in Philippi or not). It is more accurate to state that Paul insists on alerting his readers as to the possible dangers regarding the opponents⁶⁹, in order to provide it as a safeguard (see ἀσφαλές in 3:1) for them. Paul’s main thrust in 3:2 is positive. Paul’s emotional language is not aimed at specific opponents or individuals in Philippi, but is, most likely, reflective of his personal distaste for these types of opponents after years of struggling with them (Fee 1995:Kindle locations 8503-8510)⁷⁰.

The suggested reading of Phil 3:2 creates unity between this passage and what went before in the letter (especially in light of 2:29), whilst also enabling a much better understanding of some of the issues that Paul refers to in the rest of the letter, namely, “enemies of the cross” (3:18) and sharing in Christ’s sufferings, death and resurrection (3:10) (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2041-2044). Hawthorne (2004:174) tellingly notes that the Philippian Jesus-followers should consider, take proper notice of, pay attention to, or learn their lesson from these opponents. Paul uses the very practices which this group believes signals spiritual virtue to indicate that it does, in fact, signal worthless mutilation (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2047-2049).

⁶⁹ Paul uses the phrase “it is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again” (τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐκ ὀκνηρόν) in Phil 3:1. Paul intends this phrase as “preventative medicine” or “in order to stabilize things in Philippi” (Witherington III 2011:188). In other words: Paul has already made clear in Phil 3:1 what the aim is of what is to follow in the rest of the passage, i.e. “it is a safeguard to you” (ὑμῖν δὲ ἀσφαλές) (Phil 3:2).

⁷⁰ This conclusion by no means denies the possibility that these opponents attempted to influence the Philippian Jesus-followers with their opinions and insights in times past (Fee 1995:Kindle locations 8550-8553). Such dangers were, I suggest, not immediately pressing in the community at the time of Paul’s writing of the letter.

Finally, I am convinced that the identity of the opponents is of lesser importance than the content of their beliefs and practices. Perhaps this is the reason why Paul does not go to any great lengths to directly provide his readers with the identity of his opponents. He is much more interested in the content of their beliefs and practices, and the dangers that these beliefs and practices pose.

Paul's logical argument in Phil 3:2 can, therefore, be presented in the following manner: watch out for those hungry, unclean, wandering packs of dogs! Watch out for those who do evil! Watch out for those Jesus-followers who cut everything to pieces with their Jewish obsession with proselyte circumcision as a sign of covenant membership!

2.2.2. "I have more"

There is a clear progression in Paul's personal testimony in Phil 3:4b-6. Wiersbe (1996:86) poignantly states: "Every Jew could boast of his own blood heritage (though he certainly could not take any credit for it). Some Jews could boast of their faithfulness to the Jewish religion. But Paul could boast of those things *plus* his zeal in persecuting the church" (emphasis in original).

Diagram 6 indicates the progression in Paul's testimony in Phil 3:4b-6. In 3:4b Paul shows his intention with the personal testimony he is about to give, by saying that, if anyone else thinks they have reason to put their confidence in the flesh, he has more. In 3:4 the sentence, *καίπερ ἐγὼ ἔχων πεποίθησιν καὶ ἐν σαρκί*, "though I myself have reasons for such confidence", is elliptical. This is a subordinate participial phrase with no main verb. The main verb must therefore be selected from the preceding verses, namely, "οὐ δ' ἔσομαι πεποιθὼς ἐν σαρκί, 'but I will not put confidence in myself'" (Hawthorne 2004:183). *Ἐγὼ μᾶλλον*, "I have more", is the expression Paul uses to state his intent with the personal testimony he is about to deliver in 3:5-6.

In Phil 3:5-6 Paul proceeds to show - by giving an account of his heritage and achievements - what it means to "have more" reason to put confidence in the flesh than anyone else. From Paul's

description in 3:5-6 it becomes obvious that Paul, right from the start, presented himself as the quintessential group-oriented person in the first-century collectivist society. He was controlled by forces greater than himself: God ascribed his role, status and honor at birth. Paul is a Pharisee, a member of a specific group. He is totally group oriented: loyal, faithful and obedient, seeking God's honor and group benefits (Malina & Neyrey 1996:203). Paul was a typically group-oriented person (1996:217)⁷¹.

In Phil 3:5 Paul lists the following aspects concerning his heritage: περιτομῇ ὀκταήμερος, ἐκ γένους Ἰσραήλ, φυλῆς Βενιαμίν, Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων, “circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews”. Paul makes it clear that because he received the sign of the covenant, namely, circumcision, on the eighth day of his life, he was a part of God's covenant people, Israel, from birth and he has shared in its privileges from day one. He is from Israel's most prestigious tribe, Benjamin, and have not been paganized by Hellenism.

I will now pay attention to important literary and rhetorical aspects involved in Paul's testimony in Phil 3:5 with the aim of deepening our understanding of Paul's testimony about his heritage⁷².

Firstly, Paul begins his personal testimony in 3:5-6 by saying that he was περιτομῇ ὀκταήμερος, “circumcised on the eighth day”. This is a clear reference to Gen 17:12 and Lev 12:3 which tells the story of circumcision being the sign of inclusion in the covenant of the people of Israel with God. This would be a clear indication to all his readers that he, Paul, is no proselyte - he was a member of the covenant from birth⁷³ (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2088-2089)⁷⁴.

Secondly, Paul continues his description of his heritage: ἐκ γένους Ἰσραήλ, “of the people of Israel”, indicates that which the gentile converts will become should they continue to circumcise

⁷¹ Paul says as much in 1 Cor 4:7.

⁷² Again, I will pay specific attention also to the social and cultural texture in Phil 3:5-6.

⁷³ Lightner (1985:660) and Hawthorne (2004:184) adds Ishmael and his descendants to the group from which Paul is distancing himself through the use of this phrase.

⁷⁴ See also Henry (1994:2326).

themselves. Paul was, however, given this status with all its privileges from birth, which included all the privileges of the covenant community (O'Brien 1991:370). Israel is the name for the covenant people of God (Rom 9:4; 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22)⁷⁵. Γένος appears six times in Paul. In most instances it is used to denote origin (from birth) (Hasler 1990:244).

Thirdly, through Paul's use of φυλῆς Βενιαμίν, "of the tribe of Benjamin", one cannot help but to sense the immense pride Paul must have felt being a descendant of this tribe of Israel. In Deut 33:12 (NIV) Moses says of Benjamin that they are "the beloved of the Lord ... the one the Lord loves rests between his shoulders". Benjamin was the only one of Jacob's sons born in the promised land and he was the younger son of Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel. Paul's namesake (Saul), the first king of Israel, was from the tribe of Benjamin. Only Judah and Benjamin remained true to the house of David (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2089-2091). The tribe of Benjamin also had Jerusalem and the temple within its borders (O'Brien 1991:371). To these qualities Hawthorne (2004:185) adds that the tribe of Benjamin always held the post of honor in the army, a fact that gave rise to the battle cry "lead on, O Benjamin" (Hos 5:8, NIV). The famous Mordecai, responsible for the great national deliverance commemorated in the feast of Purim, was a Benjamite (Esth 2:5)⁷⁶. From this list of accolades attributed to the tribe of Benjamin it is clear why Paul would have believed that he could put his confidence in his heritage.

Fourthly, in the phrase Ἑβραῖος⁷⁷ ἐξ Ἑβραίων, "a Hebrew of Hebrews", Paul sums up the three phrases he has used up to this point in Phil 3:5, and he also sets the scene for the next three phrases. Paul accentuates the fact that he is a pure blood Hebrew (Fee 1995:Kindle locations 9003-9004). Paul was no Hellenist, even though he was born in the Dispersion, and he was possibly protected from the paganizing influences of Hellenism (O'Brien 1991:372)⁷⁸. Louw & Nida (1995:96) points out that Ἑβραῖος was used in the Old Testament as a distinctive national term, whilst

⁷⁵ See Louw & Nida (1995:96) and Hawthorne (2004:184).

⁷⁶ See also Hillyer (1971:872-873).

⁷⁷ In the New Testament Ἑβραῖος occurs four times (Wanke 1990:369).

⁷⁸ Hawthorne (2004:185) confirms the views of O'Brien in this regard.

in the New Testament it referred to the Jew who retained his national way of life, in contrast to the Hellenist⁷⁹.

Finally, at the end of Phil 3:5, Paul shifts his attention to the list of his personal achievements. Up to now Paul has shown what his privilege was by birth. In what is to follow in 3:5-6 he will highlight how he has excelled in using these privileges in order to become without fault. Paul lists his achievements by means of three *κατὰ*-statements: *κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος*, *κατὰ ζήλος διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν*, *κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος*, “in regard to the law, a Pharisee, as for zeal, persecuting the church, as for righteousness in the law, blameless.” Paul has kept the law of Moses strictly as a Pharisee. He was vigorous in his pursuit of keeping the law and his ancestral traditions, even up to the point of persecuting the Jesus-followers in the same way an army would pursue its enemy. In terms of perfection in the law, he was without fault. The progression in Paul’s achievements can be listed as follows: Pharisee, persecuting the church, blameless. I will now look at some of the important literary and rhetorical aspects involved in each of these three instances in turn, which should assist us in our understanding of Paul’s achievements.

Firstly, *κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος*, “in regard to the law, a Pharisee”. “Pharisee” means “separated one”. These “separated ones” first appear towards the end of the second century B.C. and seem to have been the spiritual heirs of pious groups who played an important part in the defense of their ancestral religion during the pogrom under Antiochus Epiphanes (175–163 B.C.) (O’Brien 1991:373). Of the ninety-nine uses of the term *Φαρισαῖος* found in the New Testament, the use of the term here in Phil 3:5 is the only reference outside of the Gospels and Acts (Baumbach 1990:415).

⁷⁹ Matthew Novenson (2020:240) highlights three directions which modern research has taken regarding the concept of Judaism. Firstly, research (e.g. Jacob Neuser 1987) argues that ancient Jewish belief and practice were so diverse that we should speak of Judaisms, instead of Judaism. Secondly, in an opposite direction (e.g. Daniel Boyarin 2018) it has been argued that Judaism did not exist in antiquity at all. Thirdly, it has been argued (e.g. Brent Nongbri 2013) that religion did not exist in antiquity in the sense that the term is used today. According to Novenson (2020:242) Paul abandoned *Ioudaismos* (see Gal 1:13-14 for the only two references to this term in the New Testament) - which is Paul’s own exceptional activist program for the defence and promotion of the religion of the Jewish people - when he met the risen Christ. Paul did not, however, abandon his ancestral traditions (2020:242). The larger debate on Second Temple Judaism and whether “Jews” or “Judeans” are the most appropriate terms to use to describe those who aligned themselves with the movement, cannot be addressed here in detail, given the difference in focus and limited space available in this dissertation.

According to Louw & Nida (1995:96), Pharisees were one of the strictest sects in Judaism. Living somewhere on the spectrum between the extreme and possibly violent zeal of the ardent Shammaite and the extreme and possibly flexible caution of the ardent Hillelite, the Pharisee was passionate about the ancestral traditions, particularly the law of Moses and the development of that into oral law. The importance of keeping this double Torah was not simply because it was required, or in order to earn the divine favor, but because a renewed keeping of the law with all one's heart and soul was one of the biblically stated conditions (see Deut 30) for the great renewal, the eschaton and all that it would mean. It was what constituted the appropriate and faithful response to the faithfulness of Israel's God (Wright 2013a:Kindle locations 5159-5171)⁸⁰. Paul's mention of his Pharisaic approach sets the scene for making proper sense of the final two statements in 3:6 (Fee 1995:Kindle locations 9009-9013).

Paul's progressive argument in Phil 3:5 can now be presented in the following manner: I received the sign of the covenant, namely, circumcision, on the eighth day of my life; I was a part of God's covenant people, Israel, from birth and I have shared in its privileges from day one; I am from Israel's most prestigious tribe, Benjamin, and I have not been paganized by Hellenism; I have kept the law of Moses strictly as a Pharisee.

Secondly, Paul continues in Phil 3:6: κατὰ ζήλον, "as for zeal". In the Old Testament ζήλος is used as a human emotion, as well as to indicate a specific intensity in the divine action (Stumpff 1964:878-879). Zeal for God was highly praised in the Old Testament. Phinehas in particular was regarded as both a precedent and a prototype of this godly zeal (Num 25:6–13). Ps 106:30–31 links his zealous action with righteousness being accounted to him, a conjunction not unimportant in the light of Paul's juxtaposition of zeal and righteousness here at 3:6 (O'Brien 1991:375)⁸¹.

⁸⁰ See also Fowl (2005:Kindle locations 2097-2098).

⁸¹ See Hawthorne (2004:186).

According to Popkes (1990:100) there are four uses of ζῆλος in the New Testament: 1) Old Testament and Jewish “holy zeal”; 2) hostility occasioned by ill will; 3) “jealousy” in the vice catalogs; and 4) the desire to attain goals or to be devoted to someone. Ζῆλος (16 New Testament occurrences) and ζηλόω (11 occurrences) appear in the New Testament predominantly in Paul (18 times, not in the Pastorals), also in John (once), Acts (4 times), Hebrews (once), and James (3 times). It is rare in the literature that is under stronger Greek influence, suggesting that a Jewish influence in its usage exists.

“Zeal” can also sometimes refer to a vice in Paul’s writings (Rom 13:13; 1 Cor 3:3; 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:20); he can also use it approvingly of vigorous pursuit of an object of desire (see 1 Cor 12:31; 14:1, 39; 2 Cor 9:2; 11:2; Tit 2:14). In this particular case Paul cites his persecution of the church as a mark of his devotion to Judaism (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2099-2101).

It is not indicated explicitly here in Phil 3:6 by Paul exactly what he was zealous for, but it is safe to assume that this refers to his zeal for the law, as well as his ancestral traditions (O’Brien 1991:375–376). Zeal for God was the greatest quality in the religious life of a Jew. Paul was so zealous that he tried to wipe out those whom he considered the opponents of Judaism (Louw & Nida 1995:97). Paul had first opposed Jesus with the purpose of establishing his own righteousness, of obeying his ideal of perfect service to God. In the process, he failed to recognize the Messiah and sought to destroy the church (Ortlund 2012:160).

Paul’s zeal was aimed at διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, “persecuting the church”. Διώκω has as its basic meaning “to pursue”. Paul creates a word picture in which an army pursues its enemy (Hawthorne 2004:186). Paul was “maniacal” in his persecution of the church (2004:186). Saul imprisoned and possibly even killed Jesus-followers (see 1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13–14, 23; 1 Tim 1:13) (Utley 1997:193). Fredriksen (2020:24-30) provides more insight into the possibilities surrounding the why and the what of Paul’s persecuting activities. Even though Paul nowhere explicitly stated the content of these persecutions in his letters, Fredriksen (2020:24-25) suggests that Paul’s lamenting of

his own hardships as an apostle (see 2 Cor 11:24-27) could provide us with some details as to the possible nature of Paul's persecution of the church. From the list of hardships provided in 2 Cor 11:24-27, Fredriksen (2020:25) highlights the "thirty-nine lashes" which Paul received no fewer than "five times" as the most likely option for the content of Paul's own persecuting activities against the church. This form of punishment was an intra-Jewish form of punishment which had to be willingly accepted by the recipient (2020:25). Paul, then, most likely, persecuted other Jesus-followers in this same way whilst acting on behalf of the synagogue authorities in Damascus: "They were the synagogue's attempt at damage control, its attempt to contain the gospel message because it was so destabilizing - not for other Jews ... but for affiliated ex-pagan gentiles" (2020:44) (emphasis in original). When these gentiles were adopted into God's family through the Spirit (within the context of the Jewish synagogue), they had to stop acting like gentiles. They "could no longer participate in civic cult to local deities, nor sacrifice before those deities' images ... In this way they threatened majority culture's 'friendly agreement' between heaven and earth" (2020:43-44). For this they had to pay a price.

The term τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, "the church", could refer to a local assembly or congregation of Jesus-followers, a house church, or to a heavenly gathering (O'Brien 1991:376-377). Lenski (1961:834) defines ἐκκλησία here as an innovating body of people who were abrogating the law and following Jesus. Hawthorne (2004:187) further accentuates the true meaning of ἐκκλησία in Phil 3:1-11 as the universal "body of Christ"⁸². The location of the church referred to in 3:6 is difficult to determine. Fredriksen, referring to Gal 1:13, 16-17, indicates that Damascus was a likely location for Paul's initial persecuting activities against the church (2020:23-24) ⁸³.

⁸² See Utey (1997:193), O'Brien (1991:378) and Louw & Nida (1995:97) for an investigation of the church that was the object of Paul's persecuting activities possibly being in Jerusalem.

⁸³ Gordon Fee (1995:Kindle locations 9018-9021) notes that there might be some irony in Paul's statement here in that the Judaizers are also persecuting the church with their message of trusting in the flesh (see also Hawthorne 2004:187).

Thirdly, the culmination of Paul's personal achievements is expressed in the third κατά-statement: κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος, "in relation to the righteousness that is in the law, having become blameless" (O'Brien 1991:378).

In the Old Testament Hebrew *ṣḏq* - "righteousness" - implies relationship. A person is righteous when a person meets certain claims which another has on him or her in virtue of relationship. Even the righteousness of God is primarily His covenantal rule in fellowship with His people. The definition of *ṣḏq* as a concept of relationship already includes both the forensic elements and the idea of saving action (Bultmann 1964b:195).

Δικαιοσύνη is a central and very important term in Paul's theology⁸⁴. The substantive δικαιοσύνη appears in the New Testament 91 times, of which 57 are in the Pauline literature and 33 in Romans. Δικαιοσύνη belongs to the preferred words of the Pauline letters and, therefore, the word represents one of the most important theological concepts (Kertelge 1990:326). Paul makes the most frequent use of this whole word-group, and gives it its widest range of meanings. Paul establishes the closest connection with the Old Testament, when speaking of God's righteousness and God's justification of sinners. Δικαιοσύνη has as its main use in Paul the focus of soteriology and not ethics, namely, being saved as opposed to doing certain things in order to be saved (1990:327).

Some commentators have taken κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος as confirmation that Paul was consumed by guilt, tortured by an introspective conscience, and in search of a gracious God to free him from a legalistic and oppressive Judaism (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2105-2106). This interpretation presents a misreading of the text. O'Brien (1991:379) points out that Paul states clearly that he has indeed achieved the high standards to which Pharisees held. He describes himself as "blameless" - Paul lived up to the high standards set before him by the Pharisaic tradition⁸⁵. This stands in stark contrast to the mood and self-description of a man who are consumed by guilt or the disappointment of not being able to live up to that which is expected of him or that

⁸⁴ See O'Brien (1991:378).

⁸⁵ See Fowl (2005:Kindle locations 2106-2111).

which he expects of himself⁸⁶. Todd Still (2014:140-143) draws attention to the fact that Paul's list of his heritage and achievements in Phil 3:5-6 contains exactly seven elements. Citing uses from ancient Jewish, Greco-Roman and Christian writers, he illustrates that the number seven is indicative of completion, perfection or fullness. Still (2014:145) argues that it is reasonable to suffice that a reader in an ancient Mediterranean context such as Philippians would have picked up on this symbolic meaning: "The seven-item 'catalogue of boasting' in 3.5-6 heightens and sharpens the dialectical tension that permeates ch.3."

Still (2014:145) draws a striking parallel between Phil 3:5-6 and Rom 9:4-5. In both these passages Paul sets forth a sevenfold "catalogue of boasting" with respect to Jewish pedigree and past performance only to devalue it in light of the person and pursuit of Christ. Terms of completion, maturity, or perfection appear three times in Phil 3 (see vv. 12, 15, 19; cf. 1.6) (2014:178). This sevenfold list shows the reader how Paul believed himself to be pure, complete, whole, mature, without fault (2014:146)⁸⁷. This presentation of perfection does not leave the reader with a sense that Paul is a man consumed by guilt.

Paul's progressive argumentation in Phil 3:6 can, therefore, be presented in the following manner: I was vigorous in my pursuit of keeping the law and my ancestral traditions, even up to the point of persecuting the Jesus-followers in the same way an army would pursue its enemy. In terms of perfection in the law, I was without fault.

⁸⁶ See Hawthorne (2004:187).

⁸⁷ Moule (1975:163) paraphrase Paul's testimony as follows: "Such was my position. I possessed an ideal pedigree; full sacramental position from the first; domestic traditions pure and strict; an absolute personal devotion to the cause of my creed; the most rigorous observance of its rules; the most energetic."

2.2.3. “what is more”

It is noticeable that Paul uses the verb ἡγέομαι, “to consider”, in both instances in Phil 3:7-8 where he describes κέρδη, “profit” and ζημίαν, “loss”. First, in 3:7: [Ἀλλὰ]⁸⁸ ἅτινα ἦν μοι κέρδη, ταῦτα ἡγῆμαι διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν ζημίαν, “But whatever was to my *profit* I now *consider* loss because of Christ.” Second, in 3:8: ἀλλὰ μενοῦνγε καὶ ἡγοῦμαι πάντα ζημίαν εἶναι διὰ τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου, δι’ ὃν τὰ πάντα ἐζημιώθην, καὶ ἡγοῦμαι σκύβαλα, ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω, “What is more, I continue to *consider everything a loss* compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have *lost* all things. I *consider them excrement* that I may *gain* Christ.” (emphasis my own).

What is Paul’s rhetorical thrust with his use of ἡγέομαι in Phil 3:7-8? Sergio Nebreda (2011:344-345) indicates that the core of the Philippian church’s identity is found in something other than nationalistic or ethnic elements - the type of which Paul refers to in 3:4-6. For him the universal lordship of Christ is affirmed in subverted terms in the Christ-hymn found in 2:5-11. This Christ-identity is based on the Christ-event⁸⁹, “that gives birth to a new people no longer defined in ethnic origin or social merit terms. Paul succinctly captures this in Phil 3.5-8” (2011:344). Paul has radically altered his value system in favor of one with higher value and of great service to others - even if that meant the loss of honor in an honor-seeking context of the Philippian community (2011:345). This, I suggest, is the rhetorical effect created by Paul’s use of the term ἡγέομαι in 3:7-8.

Paul uses the perfect tense of the verb, ἡγῆμαι, in Phil 3:7 which indicates, “a past completed action with continuing results” (Marshall 2014:121). Lenski (1961:836) and Hawthorne (2004:190) notes that the different tenses of the same verb which Paul uses in 3:7-8 (ἡγῆμαι and ἡγοῦμαι) should draw our attention to it, since this is an intentional and deliberate ploy used by the author.

⁸⁸ There is some doubt as to whether the conjunction Ἀλλὰ was part of the original text. Whatever the case may be, this conjunction indicates a marked transition at this point (Hawthorne 2004:188).

⁸⁹ The term “Christ-event” refers to Jesus’s initial coming, death, resurrection and exaltation (Gorman 2020:194).

In Phil 3:8 Paul uses the verb ἡγοῦμαι, which is a present, either middle or passive, indicative verb of the root form ἡγέομαι, “to consider.” The present tense of the verb⁹⁰ indicates that Paul’s regarding of former profitable things as loss for the sake of Christ, is still something which he considers in this way⁹¹. Phil 3:8, “begins with an extraordinary accumulation of particles - ἀλλὰ μὲνοῦνγε καὶ - that are virtually impossible to translate into English, but that in Greek, nevertheless, powerfully emphasize the shift from the perfect tense ἤγημαι, ‘I have counted’ all my advantages as loss (indicating enduring action or result [v 7]), to the present tense ἡγοῦμαι, ‘I continue to count’ them as loss, and from the particular ἅτινα, ‘what things’ (v 7), to the universal πάντα, ‘everything’” (Hawthorne 2004:189-190)⁹². Paul, through his use of the different tenses of ἡγέομαι, most likely, also prepares the reader for his description in 3:12-16 on the “not-yet” dimension of life in the Spirit. For Paul, life in God’s family is a life-in-process.

Whereas Paul previously considered all the things mentioned in Phil 3:5-6 as loss, he now indicates in 3:8 that he considers “everything”, πάντα, as loss for the sake of Christ - not only those things mentioned in 3:5-6. O’Brien indicates that Paul emphasises which was already said in 3:7 and also further highlights that his past act of considering trust in the things mentioned in verse 5-6 as loss, he continues to this very moment of writing to consider them loss - only now he considers all things loss; not only trust in those things mentioned in 3:5-6 (O’Brien 1991:386)⁹³.

⁹⁰ The verb tense where the writer portrays an action in process or a state of being with no assessment of the action’s completion (Heiser 2005:In Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology).

⁹¹ The translation of the phrase, διὰ τὸν Χριστόν, is a discussion point worth debating. The preposition διὰ with the accusative case can mean “because of, on account of”, thus indicating that Christ was the ground or cause of this amazing change in Paul’s values; or it can be rendered “for the sake of”, thus pointing to the motive of Paul’s actions: it was “for Christ’s sake” that his change of outlook occurred. The decision here rests on a reading of the phrase within the broader context of this text. Taking into consideration that Paul discusses his longing to gain and to know Christ in 3:8, it might make sense to interpret the threefold use of this preposition διὰ (here and twice in v. 8) as, “for the sake of Christ” (O’Brien 1991:385).

In 3:7 Paul indicates the original reason for his considering of loss of that which was previously of value to him - “because of Christ”/because He is the Lord whilst in 3:8 Paul states the reason for his continuing to consider these things, as well as all things, as loss: “for the sake of” knowing Christ and gaining him.

⁹² “Paul uses a series of particles (‘yes rather even’) as a forceful introduction for an important statement. The combined force of these particles indicates that his statement in verse 7 is inadequate, and he feels constrained to reinforce it” (Louw & Nida 1995:99).

See also Lenski (1961:836).

⁹³ “I actually now consider all things, from all points of view, all possessions, all ambitions” (Moule 1975:164).

From this description, a clear progression in Paul's thoughts and beliefs can be traced in Phil 3:7-8. Diagram 7 indicates this progression. The movement of Paul's thought is presented in the following way: 7) ἅτινα, "whatever", ταῦτα ἡγῆμαι διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν ζημίαν, "I now consider loss because of Christ." 8) ἀλλὰ μενοῦνγε καὶ, "what is more", ἡγοῦμαι πάντα ζημίαν, "I continue to consider everything a loss", καὶ ἡγοῦμαι σκύβαλα, "I consider them rubbish". The progression is, therefore, seen on two fronts.

First, ἅτινα, "whatever" (which refers back to Phil 3:5-6) is seen as ζημίαν, "loss", by Paul. There are, initially, definite boundaries to what Paul considers as loss. This list from 3:5-6 is then expanded by Paul (his use of a number of conjunctions and articles - ἀλλὰ μενοῦνγε καὶ, "what is more"- clearly indicates the progression) when he says, ἡγοῦμαι πάντα ζημίαν εἶναι, "I continue to consider everything a loss". The progression can most clearly be seen in Paul's use of ἅτινα, "whatever", and later on in his use of πάντα, "everything".

Second, Paul intensifies his use of the noun in Phil 3:7-8. Initially, Paul uses the noun ζημίαν, "loss", whilst he ends up using the noun σκύβαλα, "rubbish", in 3:8. Paul uses the verb ἡγοῦμαι for the third time in 3:7-8. Whereas he previously made use of the noun ζημία alongside the verb, here Paul substitutes ζημία with the noun σκύβαλα⁹⁴. The word is a hapax legomena in Pauline writings and the use of the term can, therefore, only be studied by scrutinizing its use in the ancient world. One can only consider how σκύβαλον was used in the ancient world and compare it with Paul's one-time use of the term in 3.8 (Punch 2014:373).

⁹⁴ "σκύβαλον turns up only here in the NT. Although its derivation is uncertain, the term was used in the Greek world of (1) 'dung, muck' both as excrement and food gone bad, (2) 'scraps' left after a meal, and (3) 'refuse'. It is here used in the first sense." (O'Brien 1991:390). Bruce translates σκύβαλον, "rubbish, the merest street sweepings" (Bruce 1989:113); Moule also opts for, "I consider it only refuse, rubbish" (Moule 1975:165); "The connotation is that all Paul's Jewish excellencies were for him made and are now by him ever considered a stinking mess" (Lenski 1961:837). Louw & Nida (1995:101) makes a similar case: "The Greek word rendered *garbage* can mean either 'excrement' (*KJV* 'dung') or 'that which is thrown to the dogs,' that is, 'rubbish' (*JB NAB*), 'refuse' (*RSV*), or 'garbage' (*NEB*). In any case, the idea is that of utter worthlessness and disgust. *I consider it all as mere garbage* may be rendered as 'I count all this as fit for the refuse heap,' or, expressed somewhat more idiomatically, 'I throw all of it into the street'" (emphasis in original); see also Hawthorne (2004:192).

An overview of these materials from the ancient world concludes that the meaning of σκύβαλον includes the cruder “crap” and perhaps even the socially offensive “shit” as part of its meaning. Though there are clear examples from antiquity where σκύβαλον is used for “refuse” or “table scraps,” these few examples are outweighed by the more extensive usage relating to “dung” and “excrement,” specifically those that date around the time of Paul (Punch 2014:381). Paul would want the Philippian readers to take very careful notice of the radical nature of the change that the gospel had brought into his life. Using a word with unpleasant connotations in a calculated manner would have been Paul’s attempt at getting a reaction out of this group of Jesus-followers. Domesticating Paul’s use of the word would rob the modern reader of this shock-effect (2014:381-382)⁹⁵. Paul is not trying to be delicate in his description; he is trying to assert a point (Cosby 2009:192).

Σκύβαλον is, therefore, in no way an inappropriate word choice by Paul. It much rather serves to accentuate the deep-seated and the progressive nature of his consideration of all things which prevents him from boasting in Christ Jesus (O’Brien 1991:390). Hawthorne tellingly indicates that, through the use of σκύβαλα, we can deduce that Paul “did not lament this loss. For him it was a welcomed relief” (Hawthorne 2004:192)⁹⁶.

<u>Verse number</u>	Βλέπετε	τοὺς κύνας	τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας	τὴν κατατομήν

⁹⁵ It is important to take note of Fee’s (1995:Kindle locations 9244-9253) thoughts in this regard which represents an effort to domesticate the use of the term here: “The word translated ‘rubbish’ is well attested as a vulgarity, referring to excrement (hence ‘dung’ in the KJV); on the other hand, it is also well attested to denote ‘refuse,’ especially of the kind that was thrown out for the dogs to forage through. Although it could possibly mean ‘dung’ here more likely Paul is taking a parting shot at the ‘dogs’ in v. 2, especially since he uses language very much like this in 1 Cor 4:13 to refer to all that is off-scouring and refuse. A translation like ‘filth’ (NJB) perhaps captures both the ambiguity and vulgarity. In either case, it is hard to imagine a more pejorative epithet than this one now hurled at what the Judaizers would promote as advantages. Paul sees them strictly as disadvantages, as total loss, indeed as ‘foul-smelling street garbage’ fit only for ‘dogs.’”

⁹⁶ This section contains a brief description of the oral-scribal intertexture involved in the use of σκύβαλον in Phil 3:8. Oral-scribal intertexture “appears when wording from other written or oral texts appears in the text under investigation” (Robbins 1996b:121).

3:2	“Watch out”	“for those dogs”	“for those men who do evil”	“for those mutilators”
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Diagram 5: Progression in Paul’s warning in Phil 3:2

Paul’s description of his opponents in Phil 3:2 intensifies progressively. He progresses from describing these opponents as hungry and unclean wandering dogs to evil doers to, finally, people who are obsessed with circumcision as a badge of their covenant membership.

<u>Verse number</u>	<u>“I have more”</u>	<u>Heritage</u>	<u>Achievements</u>
3:4b	ἐγὼ μᾶλλον		
3:5		περιτομῇ ὀκταήμερος, ἐκ γένους Ἰσραήλ, φυλῆς Βενιαμίν, Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων, “circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews”	κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος, “in regard to the law, a Pharisee”
3:6			κατὰ ζῆλος διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν

			νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος, “as for zeal, persecuting the church, as for righteousness in the law, blameless.”
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Diagram 6: Progression in Paul’s testimony in Phil 3:4b-6

Paul provides the reader with a progressive description of his heritage and achievements in Phil 3:5-6. The progression can be seen in terms of Paul’s movement of description of his heritage from the time he was a new-born baby (3:5) right up to the time when he was able to start making his own choices, namely, when he could start “achieving” (from the end of 3:5 and into 3:6). The progression in terms of Paul’s description reaches its climax in his statement that he is “without fault” (3:6).

<u>Verse numbers</u>	<u>“Profit” (κέρδη)</u>	<u>“Loss” (ζημίαν)</u>
3:7	[Ἀλλὰ] ἅτινα ἦν μοι κέρδη, “but <i>whatever</i> was to my profit” (ἅτινα, “whatever”, is a reference to the ethnocentric covenantalism which Paul describes in Phil 3:5-6)	ταῦτα ἡγῆμαι διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν ζημίαν, “I now <i>consider loss</i> because of Christ.”

3:8	<p>ἀλλὰ μενοῦνγε καὶ, “<i>what is more</i>”</p> <p>καὶ ἡγοῦμαι σκύβαλα, ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω, I <i>consider them rubbish</i> that I may gain Christ.”</p>	<p>ἡγοῦμαι πάντα ζημίαν εἶναι διὰ τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου, δι’ ὃν τὰ πάντα ἐζημιώθην, “I continue to consider <i>everything a loss</i> compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have <i>lost all things</i>.”</p>
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Diagram 7: Progression in Paul’s thought in Phil 3:7-8

Paul evaluates his prior beliefs and his prior way of life in Phil 3:7-8. Paul comes to an understanding of his past which he progressively describes in more negative terms. Paul starts off by saying “whatever is loss” (3:7), and he ends up by saying “everything is rubbish” (3:8) - ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω, “that I may gain Christ.”

In the following section I will discuss the opening-middle-closing texture of Phil 3:1-11.

2.3. Opening-middle-closing texture: the Philippian Jesus-followers' partnership in the gospel

2.3.1. The structure of Phil 3:1-11

The opening-middle-closing texture of a text aims to answer questions such as: what is the nature of the opening of a unit in relation to its closure, and whether the unit is an entire text or a subdivision in it?

Philippians has been a “Rubik’s Cube” of Pauline literature (Swift 1984:234). The book has been rearranged, twisted, and turned by scholars in an effort to make the best sense of it. Determining the structural layout of Phil 3:1-11, demands an understanding and an appreciation of the structural design of the book of Philippians in its entirety. Exegetes have found it difficult to find a main theme or line of argument in Philippians (1984:234). This is true, in part, due to the multi-layered content of the letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers (Snyman 2006:262), which includes the threat of the opponents, a lack of Christian joy, internal unrest and disunity. Paul’s letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers covers a good many well-known theological topics, including Christology, soteriology, and eschatology (Wright 2005:Kindle locations 1651-1653). The letter is rich in figurative expressions taken from everyday life and the letter has many great themes (Louw & Nida 1995:2).

In light of the richness and variety of themes found in Paul’s letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers, the reader would do well to identify a central theme capable of providing the reader of the text of Philippians with a systematic, coherent and logical structure from which to unearth the message of the book. The letter’s chief value for theological interpretation may be found in the way in which it portrays a view of what it means to live as a Jesus-follower within a pagan society: “conduct yourselves worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Phil 1:27) (Wright 2005:Kindle locations 1651-1653). In 1:27 Paul states quite explicitly that “the one thing” (μόνον) that matters to him in writing the letter, is that the Philippian Jesus-followers conduct themselves worthy of the gospel of Christ (Snyman 2006:262).

Robert Swift (1984:250) proposes Philippians as a “masterly example of epistolary literature.” Philippians has one central theme broad enough to explain the details of the entire epistle, and the development of this theme maintains a literary structure that is systematic, coherent, and logical (1984:236). According to Swift (1984:250), a formal prologue introduces the main theme of the letter and foreshadows its development. Philippians is an epistle with structure, because it is an epistle with a message, a message that “calls all Christians to walk worthy of the gospel if they expect to further the work of the gospel” (1984:250). I follow the structure presented by Swift, because of the emphasis Swift places on Phil 1:27 in determining the central theme of the letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers. As will become clear in the investigation of the argumentative, as well as the ideological texture of 3:1-11, I am of the opinion that Jesus’ example of humility and loyalty in 2:6-11 forms the heartbeat of the letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers. The example of Jesus in 2:6-11 provides the Philippian Jesus-followers with an example of what it means to conduct themselves worthy of the gospel of Christ (1:27). Following Swift, the macrostructure of the book of Philippians can be presented in diagram 8 as follows (1984:234)⁹⁷:

⁹⁷ Swift’s broad central theme commends itself, and the reader will do well to follow the general direction of his argument. His study requires further investigation, though (Peterlin 1995:5). For all practical purposes, I will follow the direction of Swift’s argument regarding the central theme of the letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers. This dissertation is not the place or the time to debate regarding the details of such matters as the central theme of the letter.

Grindheim (2005:118) proposes fellowship in the gospel of Christ as the unifying theme in the letter, “a theme that explains the emphasis on friendship as fellowship, the end of which is to bring glory to the Lord. The central advice is to live as (heavenly) citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (1:27-30). This advice is explained primarily through the model of Christ’s humiliation and exaltation (2:5-11) and secondarily through negative and positive examples. In 3:1-11 those of circumcision and Paul himself serve as such examples” (2005:118-119). Those opponents referred to in verse 2 does not conform to this Christ-pattern, they are therefore “unqualified for divine service” (2005:134).

Part I: Salutation (1:1-2)
Part II: Prologue (1:3-11)
Thanksgiving: The Theme Introduced (3-6)
Basis for confidence in them: The Theme Expanded (7-8)
Petition: The Theme Applied (9-11)
Part III: Biographical Prologue: The Theme Exemplified (1:12-26)
The advancement of the Gospel (12-14)
Motives for preaching Christ (15-18a)
To live or to die (18b-26)
Part IV: The Body: The Theme Particularized (1:27-4:9)
Walk worthy of the Gospel (1:27-30)
Walk in unity and steadfastness (2:1-4:1)

Being like-minded in love and humility (2:1-4)
The attitude of Christ (2:5-11)
Continue to work out your salvation (2:12-18)
Timothy (2:19-24)
Epaphroditus (2:25-30)
Walk in steadfastness (3:1-4:1)
<u>For what remains to be said (3:1)</u>
<u>Two ways of living: Ethnocentric covenantalism or worshipping God by the Spirit and boasting in Christ Jesus (3:2-4a; establishing a polemic scenario)</u>
<u>Paul's past: trusting in the flesh (3:4b-6; in the stimulation mode)</u>
<u>Paul's kenotic present and future in light of the past: The greatness of knowing Christ Jesus as the resurrected Lord (3:7-11)</u>
<u>3:7; inversion of values</u>

<u>3:8-11; renewing the proposition</u>
Pressing on toward the goal (3:12-16)
Citizenship in heaven (3:17-21)
Stand firm in the Lord (4:1)
Walk in unity and steadfastness (4:2-9)
Restore unity (4:2-3)
Maintain tranquillity (4:4-9)
Part V: Epilogue (4:10-20)
Part VI: Salutation and benediction (4:21-23)

Diagram 8

As is evident from the structure presented above, Phil 3:1-11 (underlined above) functions as a part of the larger body of the material in 1:27-4:9. Hans Dieter Betz (2015:47) refers to 3:1b-21 as an autobiographical *memorandum*, with 3:1a referring to the “previous text segment containing the commendation of Epaphroditus (2:25-30)” (2015:48). A *memorandum* was widely and diversely present in Greek and Roman, and later in Christian literature, and especially in the papyri. *Memorandum* refers to memory, reminding and saving for later usage. *Memorandum* also applied to pieces of writing, either for memory’s sake, as documents, or in preparation of larger historical or

autobiographical works, since Plato (2015:52-53). Betz (2015:52-53) divides 3:1b-21 into an introductory invective (3:2), as well as three major parts: 1) an apologetic argument in the form of an autobiographical sketch (3:3-11); 2) an example from the world of sports (3:12-16), and 3) a paraenetical appeal (3:17-21). For the purposes of this study, our main focus will be on the introductory invective⁹⁸ (3:2) and the apologetic argument in the form of an autobiographical sketch (3:3-11).

What is clear from the structural proposals by Swift and Betz is that Phil 3:1-11 forms a very definite unit as part of a larger structure which stretches from either 3:1(a)(b)-21, or 3:1(a)(b)-4:1. Either way, what is of greater importance for our purposes in this study, is to determine the structural design of Paul's thoughts in the very definite unit found in 3:1-11. In light of this, Marguerat's structural proposal of 3:1-11 serves us well.

Marguerat (2013a:194) makes an excellent suggestion concerning the structure of Paul's autobiographical *memorandum* in Phil 3:1-11⁹⁹. She proposes the following structure:

- 1) 3:2-4a: *exordium* (establishing a polemic scenario)
- 2) 3:4b-6: *narratio* (in the stimulation mode)
- 3) 3:7: *propositio* (inversion of values)
- 4) 3:8-11: *probatio* (renewing the *propositio*)
- 5) 3:12-16: *digressio* (eschatological reserve)
- 6) 3:17-4:1: *peroratio* (imitation paraenesis)

⁹⁸ An invective is "defined by its intention to 'denigrate permanently a person of public distinction in human perception'" (Betz 2015:50).

⁹⁹ The analysis of the argumentative texture will highlight my agreement with Marguerat's suggestion of the structure of Phil 3:1-11. I am of the opinion that Marguerat's suggestion accurately represents the argumentative flow of Paul's thoughts in 3:1-11.

Marguerat's distinction between *exordium*, *narratio*, *propositio* and *probatio* provides us with categories regarding the development of Paul's thoughts in Phil 3:2-11. From these categories the opening, middle, and closing parts of Paul's argument in 3:1-11 can better be identified and understood.

2.3.2. The structural content of Phil 3:1-11

In this section I will present a short analysis of each aspect of Paul's autobiographical *memorandum* in Phil 3:1-11. Finally, I will present a summary of the opening-middle-closing texture of 3:1-11.

Phil 3:1: "for what remains to be said"

As the investigation of the progressive texture highlighted, Paul's logical argument in Phil 3:1 can be presented in the following manner: for what remains to be said, make Jesus, the King, the source and the object of your joy! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again (things regarding what constitutes membership in God's covenant and the joy that comes with it - I have referred to this earlier in the letter, and I will refer to it in what is to follow here), since this keeps you safe as citizens of the heavenly commonwealth. Phil 3:1 serves the structure of Paul's letter by building a bridge between what has gone before in the letter, and what is to follow in the letter. In 3:1 Paul looks back in the letter, in order to move forward in the letter. Phil 3:1 confirms, in my opinion, the unity of the letter, as well as the unity of Paul's thought-process.

Exordium: the introduction to Paul's discourse (3:2-4a)

In Phil 3:2-4a Paul gives an introduction to this section of his argument by establishing a polemic scenario. He begins with an invective of the Jewish opponents presenting possible danger to

the Philippian Jesus-followers. Paul's logical argument in 3:2-4a can be presented in the following manner: watch out for those hungry, unclean, wandering packs of dogs! Watch out for those who do evil! Watch out for those Jesus-followers who cut everything to pieces with their Jewish obsession with circumcision as a sign of covenant membership! Circumcision is not a necessity for anyone to be a part of God's people¹⁰⁰. We are God's people: all who serve God with their whole being through his Spirit (this Spirit confirms your status as a member of God's new covenant family, and enables you to live as a member of this family; the Spirit is also the basis of your hope for future resurrection); all who put their confidence and trust in Jesus as God's anointed; all who do not put their trust in circumcision, namely, mutilation, nor in a misunderstanding of God's economy of salvation which is based on heritage and achievements. Even though I can put my confidence in these things, I will not do so.

Narratio: Paul's autobiographical narrative (3:4b-6)

In Phil 3:4b-6 Paul presents an autobiographical narrative of his own heritage and achievements. Paul's logical argument in 3:4b-6 can be presented in the following manner: if anyone else thinks that they have reason to put their confidence in these things, I have more. I received the sign of the covenant, namely, circumcision, on the eighth day of my life; I was a part of God's covenant people, Israel, from birth and I have shared in its privileges from day one; I am from Israel's most prestigious tribe, Benjamin, and I have not been paganized by Hellenism; I have kept the law of Moses strictly as a Pharisee; I was vigorous in my pursuit of keeping the law and my ancestral traditions, even up to the point of persecuting the Jesus-followers in the same way an army would pursue its enemy. In terms of perfection in the law, I was without fault.

¹⁰⁰ Paula Fredriksen (2020:32) argues that Jewish practice, namely, circumcision is not "intrinsically incompatible" with being a follower of Jesus. If this is true, Fredriksen (2020:33) asks why Paul spoke so harshly about Jewish law? Fredriksen (2020:33) answers this question by stating that "Jewish law affects Jews and non-Jews in radically different ways." The law is only a curse for gentiles, and not for Jews (2020:39).

Propositio: Paul's inversion of his values (3:7)

Phil 3:7 introduces a detailed explanation from Paul which follows in 3:8-11, which is one long sentence in Greek. Paul's logical argument in 3:7 can be presented in the following manner: I now consider all these things, that were once to my profit, as a disadvantage, because of the Anointed One. This is Paul's proposal to the Philippian Jesus-followers.

Probatio: A renewing of the proposal (3:8-11)

Paul's logical argument in Phil 3:8-11 can be presented in the following manner: What is more, I continue to consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing and of being known by Jesus my Messiah-King, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them excrement that I may gain the Messiah. And that I can be found in the Messiah, not having my own righteousness, namely, being part of God's forgiven covenantal family, which is from the law, but that which is through the faithfulness of Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faithfulness, namely, loyalty, fidelity and trust. In order that I may know Him and be known by Him, and the power of God displayed in his resurrection from the dead, and the participation in his physical and mental suffering, to be inwardly transformed in my nature by dying to myself like Jesus. I am expecting resurrection out from among the physically dead at the return of Jesus, the anointed King.

The opening-middle-closing texture of Phil 3:1-11 can, now, be presented in the following manner. First, Paul opens 3:1-11 with the exordium in 3:1-4a - by pointing back in the letter in order to move forward in the letter (3:1). He also presents an invective of the Jewish opponents which pose a possible danger to the Philippian Jesus-followers. In contrast to these opponents and their obsession with proselyte circumcision as a sign of covenant membership, Paul presents God's people as all who

serve God with their whole being through his Spirit (this Spirit confirms your status as a member of God's new covenant family, and enables you to live as a member of this family; the Spirit is also the basis of your hope for future resurrection); all who put their confidence and trust in Jesus as God's anointed; all who do not put their trust in circumcision, namely, mutilation, nor in a misunderstanding of God's economy of salvation which is based on heritage and achievements.

Second, in the middle part of Phil 3:1-11, Paul presents an autobiographical account of his heritage and achievements in 3:4b-6. Paul presents his past in terms of a sevenfold list, which indicates perfection.

Third, Paul closes this section in Phil 3:1-11 with a proposition to the Philippian Jesus-followers in 3:7-11: I now consider all these things, that were once to my profit, as a disadvantage, because of the Anointed One, says Paul, and he continues to expand on this statement in 3:8-11. Paul considers all things as excrement so that he may gain the Messiah. Paul's desire is to be found in the Messiah through a righteousness that is from loyalty, fidelity and trust in the faithfulness of Jesus. This righteousness is apart from the law. Paul's desire is to know Jesus as Christ, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His suffering. Paul's desire is to be inwardly transformed in his nature by dying to himself like Jesus. Paul expects resurrection out from among the physically dead at the return of Jesus, the anointed King¹⁰¹.

The repetition and progression in Paul's thought in Phil 3:1-11 have been established. The opening-middle-closing texture of Paul's argument has been presented.

In this section on the opening-middle-closing texture of Phil 3:1-11, I indicated that 3:1-11 forms part of a larger section, namely, 1:27-4:9. As a subsection of this larger section, 3:1-11 forms

¹⁰¹ The opening-middle-closing texture presented here is done on a somewhat truncated section, namely, 3:1-11, which forms a part of a larger rhetorical argument (termed "walk in steadfastness" in section 2.1.3.1 on the structure of 3:1-11 above) which includes the whole section of 3:1-4:1. The primary focus of this study is Paul's Christian experience as articulated in the biblical text of 3:1-11. The reason for the demarcation of this text is based on my suggestion that Paul's experience of the resurrected Jesus, as well as his reaction to this experience as described in 3:1-11, could provide Christian spirituality with a solid rootedness and clear direction. I suggest that Paul's description of this Christian experience in 3:1-11, therefore, has an invaluable contribution to make to the broader discussion of Christian spirituality.

part of 3:1-4:1. Paul's autobiographical *memorandum* in 3:1-11 can be subdivided into the following structure:

- 1) 3:1: "for what remains to be said"
- 2) 3:2-4a: *exordium*
- 3) 3:4b-6: *narratio*
- 4) 3:7: *propositio*
- 5) 3:8-11: *probatio*.

We now proceed to an analysis of the narrational texture of Paul's thought in 3:1-11. Within the narrative created by the text and lying at the basis or core of the pericope, what characters does Paul present and how does he present them?

2.4. Narrational texture

Narrational texture concerns the voices through which the words in texts speak (Robbins 1996a:15). The narrator may begin and simply continue with narration; the narrator may introduce characters who act or characters who speak; the narrator may introduce written texts that speak (1996a:15).

In Phil 3:1-11 Paul is the narrator. As his discourse proceeds, the reader is introduced to different characters. These characters perform a wide variety of functions. There are five "characters" in 3:1-11. Two of these characters are composite characters, in other words, they are made up of more than one individual and represent a specific group or reality. These five "characters" are: 1) Paul himself; 2) the Philippian Jesus-followers; 3) the opponents; 4) the deity, namely, God, Jesus and the Spirit. A fifth "character" - a composite comprising two of the four characters already mentioned - can be added to this group, namely, Paul and the Jesus-followers in Philippi. Diagram 9 indicates the

different characters in 3:1-11, as well as the different ways in which Paul depicts them. I will discuss each of these “characters” in turn.

2.4.1. Paul

Paul’s own character is the most developed character in Phil 3:1-11. From Paul’s description in 3:1-11 we gain insight into his character and beliefs from the past, the present, as well as from what Paul expects in future. First, Paul describes his past in 3:5-6. In the second part of 3:4 Paul indicates that he has more reason to boast in the flesh than anyone else. Paul is using an *argumentum ad hominem* in 3:4-6. In his own language, he is for the moment “speaking foolishly,” is “speaking not after the Lord,” (2 Cor 11:17) (Lightfoot 1913:146). Hawthorne (2004:182) states that Paul hereby speaks not as someone who is frustrated and lashes out in envy owing to his own lack of resources or achievements. Rather, although having everything, he has learned that he has nothing when he does not have Christ (2004:182). Hooker (2006:40) highlights the fact that, because of Paul’s confidence in 3:4-6, Paul’s conviction of his guilt did not come because of a struggle to keep the law. Paul does not follow the way of the Judaizers because he cannot keep up with their standards. In fact, he betters their standards, but still shuns their ways in order to gain and know Christ. Through his use of the general expression τις ... ἄλλος, “any other person” (3:4), whether there is an implied application to Judaizing opponents or not, Paul makes it clear that no one can equal his claims (O’Brien 1991:368).

In Phil 3:5-6 Paul then gives a list of seven reasons for him to boast and trust in the flesh: περιτομῇ ὀκταήμερος, ἐκ γένους Ἰσραὴλ, φυλῆς Βενιαμίν, Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων, κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος κατὰ ζῆλος διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος, “circumcised on the eighth day, from the people of Israel, from the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, in regard to the law, a Pharisee, as for zeal, persecuting the church, as for righteousness in the law, blameless”. There are three categories in this list which provides Paul with the confidence

he maintains: 1) His pure Jewish blood; 2) His legal preciseness and high status as such, and 3) His zeal for the law (Fausset 1997:366).

The sharp, well-preserved boundaries of the apostle's self-definition and self-identity highlights the ways in which Paul choses to define his background. This list included value orientations and external features that marked them. It incorporated general views of his ethnos and genos (Duling 2008:814). These mention his status (indicated by the preposition ἐκ), as well as his achievements in the flesh (indicated by the preposition κατὰ) (O'Brien 1991:368)¹⁰². The sevenfold list of Paul's past is presented in such a way as to establish the sense of perfection.

Second, Paul also provides his readers with a description of his status and beliefs in the present. In Phil 3:7-8 Paul emphasizes that he considers not only his heritage and achievements as loss because of Christ, but also that he considers everything as "excrement" when compared to the greatness of knowing Christ Jesus as his Lord. In 3:9 Paul also characterizes himself as someone who has the righteousness which is from God. Paul claims that this righteousness is his, because of his loyalty, fidelity and trust in the faithfulness of Christ. These thoughts in 3:9 is expressed in the following manner: τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει, "through the faithfulness of Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faithfulness." Paul's understanding of the Christ-event and the restored humanity which it creates, leads Paul to warn the Philippian Jesus-followers to "watch out" for anyone who preaches a message different from his gospel (3:1-2). The Christ-event also leads Paul to remind the Philippian Jesus-followers of another reality, namely, that

¹⁰² "God had chosen Paul out of the great mass of mankind, then out of his covenant people Israel, and finally from a celebrated tribe of this people. He had been set apart for holiness. For his part Paul had become a Pharisee, one separated for the law. In that cause he had demonstrated remarkable zeal, even to the extent of persecuting the church. And finally because of his complete fulfilment of the law (γενόμενος ἄμemptος) he is worthy of the crown of righteousness" (O'Brien 1991:369).

N.T. Wright (2013:Kindle locations 5171-5174) also states this same case: "To move through the different concentric circles: the Pharisaic worldview was about the whole business of being human; of being a Jewish human; of living in a Jewish community; of living in a threatened Jewish community; of living with wisdom, integrity and hope in a threatened Jewish community; of living with zeal for Torah, the covenant and above all Israel's faithful God within a threatened Jewish community."

Lightner (1985:660) confirms this view.

Smit (2013:125) draws a very interesting parallel between the identification of Philippian civil identity and Paul's self-presentation.

they should “rejoice in the Lord” (3:1). In 3:3 Paul summarizes the characteristics of the life of all Jesus-followers when he says, ἡμεῖς γάρ ἐσμεν ἡ περιτομή, οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες, “for it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who have not put confidence in the flesh”.

Third, in Phil 3:10-11 we see the ways in which Paul characterizes his life in the future. Paul’s life is characterized by very specific strivings. Firstly, Paul’s desire is to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his suffering, τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ καὶ [τὴν] κοινωνίαν [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ (3:10). Second, Paul’s desire is to be conformed to the death of Jesus, συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ (3:10). Third, Paul hopes to attain to the resurrection from the dead, εἴ πως καταντήσω εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν (3:11).

Paul’s description of his past, his present, as well as his hoped-for future provides us with a well-developed insight into the character that is Paul.

2.4.2. The Philippian Jesus-followers

Paul refers to the Philippian Jesus-followers as “my family” (3:1). Paul uses familial terms of endearment nine times in his letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers (Tanye 2010:189)¹⁰³. The importance of living as a family of brothers and sisters with God as Father cannot be overestimated in Paul’s writings. Paul aims to persuade Jesus-followers to live together in the same solidarity and the same communion that is epitomised in the biological family (2010:190). The Philippian are made righteous by the faithfulness of Jesus, and their loyalty, fidelity and trust in Jesus (3:9). Not only does this secure the status of the Philippian Jesus-followers as righteous, it also includes them in the family

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For a rich description regarding the believer being adopted into God’s family, see Burke (2006).

of God, namely, it makes them children of Abraham since God has adopted them into this family through Jesus and the Spirit (3:3). The Philippian Jesus-followers can, therefore, be called “brothers (and sisters)” of Paul, who has always been a part of the covenant by birth (3:5).

Paul gives his family two commands in Phil 3:1-11: “rejoice” (3:1) and “watch out” (3:2). The Philippian Jesus-followers are to rejoice in the Lord (3:1), whilst, at the same time, they are to watch out for the opponents, namely, the dogs, the men who do evil, and the mutilators (3:2). Paul expects the Philippian Jesus-followers to perform these actions, because it is a “safeguard” to them (ὁμῖν δὲ ἀσφαλές) (3:1). Joy in the Lord, and being on the watch for anyone who proclaims a different form of the good news of God’s establishing of righteousness and of adopting into His family all who are loyal to Jesus, keeps them safe as part of God’s heavenly commonwealth.

2.4.3. The opponents

The opponents are described as dogs, evildoers, and mutilators (Phil 3:2). They think they have reason to put their confidence in the flesh (3:4). Paul’s rhetoric is ferocious with regards to these opponents. Paul’s use of the word δοκεῖ in 3:4, with the transitive meaning “thinks” or “considers” (of a subjective opinion; see 1 Cor 7:40; Matt 3:9; Luk 24:37) rather than the intransitive “seems”, is probably ironical and it might even sound like a challenge¹⁰⁴ (O’Brien 1991:368). Paul is, probably, challenging the Judaizers to compare their list of heritage and achievements with his. Paul believes his list is more impressive than any list that these opponents can provide. The analysis of the repetitive-progressive texture of Phil 3:1-11 presented these opponents as, most likely, Jewish Jesus-followers who proclaimed proselyte circumcision as a necessity for gentiles who wanted to become a part of the covenant and God’s family through Abraham.

¹⁰⁴ See also Lightner (1985:659).

2.4.4. The deity: God, Jesus, Spirit¹⁰⁵

The Spirit is characterized in two ways in Phil 3:3, namely, οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες. First, the Spirit is the Spirit of God himself. Second, Jesus-followers worship or serve God through this Spirit.

Jesus, as one member of the deity in Phil 3:1-11, is depicted with specific characteristics, as well as acting in very specific ways. Paul calls those who καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, “glory in Christ Jesus”, the circumcision (3:3). Jesus is the object, occasion and the ground for their boasting. In 3:9 Jesus is characterized as being faithful. Paul uses the phrase πίστεως Χριστοῦ, “the faithfulness of Christ”. Jesus is also characterized as resurrected (and that this resurrection contains a certain power), as having suffered, and died: τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ, “the power of his resurrection” (3:10); [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ, “his sufferings” (3:10); τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ, “his death” (3:10).

God, as another member of the deity in Phil 3:1-11, is characterized as being the source of righteousness: τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην, “the righteousness which is from God” (3:9).

2.4.5. Paul and the Philippian Jesus-followers

In Phil 3:3 Paul’s switch to the personal pronoun first person plural ἡμεῖς, “we”, instead of second- and third-person personal pronouns, indicates reference to a specific group. This group can be identified as the “people of God”. Paul describes this group in the following manner in 3:3: circumcision is not a necessity for anyone to be a part of God’s people. We are God’s people: all who serve God with their whole being through his Spirit (this Spirit confirms your status as a member of God’s new covenant family, and enables you to live as a member of this family; the Spirit is also the basis of your hope for future resurrection); all who put their confidence, loyalty, fidelity and trust in

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See the investigation of the sacred texture for more details on the deity in Phil 3:1-11.

Jesus as God's anointed; all who do not put their trust in circumcision, namely, mutilation, nor in a misunderstanding of God's economy of salvation which is based on heritage and achievements. Both Paul and the Philippian Jesus-followers form a part of this group, irrespective of their heritage and achievements.

<u>Characters</u>	<u>Depiction</u>
Paul	<p>“though I myself have reasons for such confidence” (καίπερ ἐγὼ ἔχων πεποίθησιν καὶ ἐν σαρκί); “I have more” (ἐγὼ μᾶλλον); “circumcised on the eighth day, from the people of Israel, from the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, in regard to the law, a Pharisee” (περιτομῇ ὀκταήμερος, ἐκ γένους Ἰσραήλ, φυλῆς Βενιαμίν, Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων, κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος); “as for zeal, persecuting the church, as for righteousness in the law, blameless (κατὰ ζήλος διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος) (3:4b-6); τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει, “the righteousness that is from God by faithfulness” (3:9); τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ καὶ [τὴν] κοινωνίαν [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ, “to know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in his</p>

	suffering” (3:10); συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ, “being conformed to his death” (3:10); εἴ πως καταντήσω εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν, “and if, somehow, to attain to the resurrection out from the dead” (3:11)
The Philippian Jesus-followers	“my family” (ἀδελφοί μου); “rejoice in the Lord!” (χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ) (3:1); “watch out!” (Βλέπετε); “a safeguard to you” (ὕμῶν δὲ ἀσφαλές) (3:2)
The Opponents	“dogs” (τοὺς κύνας); “men who do evil” (τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας); “mutilators” (τὴν κατατομήν) (3:2); “thinks” (δοκεῖ); “to put confidence in the flesh” (πεποιθέναι ἐν σαρκί) (3:4)
Jesus	(πίστεως Χριστοῦ) “the faithfulness of Christ” (3:9); (τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ) “the power of his resurrection” (3:10); ([τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ) “his sufferings” (3:10); (τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ) “his death” (3:10)
God	“the righteousness which is from God” (τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην) (3:9)
Spirit	

	“worship by the Spirit of God” (οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες) (3:3)
Paul and the Philippian Jesus-followers	“the circumcision” (ἡ περιτομή); “worship by the Spirit of God” (οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες); “glory in Christ Jesus” (καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ); “put no confidence in the flesh” (οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες) (3:3)

Diagram 9: Paul’s depiction of the characters in Phil 3:1-11

In this section on the narrational texture of Phil 3:1-11, I briefly discussed the characters that speaks and acts in the chosen text. Five characters were discussed, namely, Paul, the Philippian Jesus-followers, the opponents, Jesus, God and the Spirit (the deity), as well as Paul and the Philippian Jesus-followers.

I will now continue the investigation of the inner texture of Phil 3:1-11 through a presentation of the argumentative texture of this passage. The purpose of this reading is to gain a deeper understanding of the logical internal reasoning of 3:1-11. The larger argument of the letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers presents the context from within which the argumentative texture of 3:1-11 should become clearer.

2.5. Argumentative texture

Argumentative texture concerns the internal reasoning in the discourse as it moves from the beginning to the end (Robbins 1996b:88). Some of this reasoning is logical. In other words, assertions are given and supported with reasons, clarified through opposites and contraries, and possibly present short or elaborate counterarguments (1996a:21). Paul follows a very logical form of argumentation

in Phil 3:1-11. I am aware of the danger of an anachronistic reading of Paul's thoughts. Paul does not, as a matter of fact, think just like us. "A straight transfer of Paul's views to our own day is neither possible, nor, perhaps, desirable" (Barclay 2020:300). Paul's argument in 3:1-11, I suggest, is best understood when it is situated within the larger argument of the letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers. A brief exploration of the possible circumstances which led to Paul's writing of the letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers should provide a framework for a better understanding of Paul's argument in 3:1-11¹⁰⁶, and will, perhaps, help us to steer clear of an anachronistic reading of the apostle's thoughts.

2.5.1. The situation in Philippi and Paul's strategy for addressing this situation

In a very insightful summary Campbell (2020:123-124) highlights the complex set of challenges which faced the Philippian community of Jesus-followers, and which prompted Paul to write the letter to them. These challenges are presented as "relational dysfunction at the leadership level" in the form of female leaders "bickering and fighting", "pressure from false teachers" in the form of "a group of rival teachers proclaiming a gospel that intertwines the significance of Jesus with

¹⁰⁶ Paul writes this letter to the Jesus-followers in Philippi from prison. There are four possible venues from where Paul wrote his letter, i.e. Rome (60-62 A.D), Ephesus (52-55 A.D), Corinth (50 A.D), or Caesarea (57-59 A.D).

"The traditional case for Rome, as we shall see, has still been made by commentators such as Bruce, O'Brien, Fee [1995], Silva, and other writers, e.g., Wick (*Philippianbrief*, 191), with Bockmuehl (32) concluding that 'the case for Rome remains the least problematic'" (Hawthorne 2004:xli) (emphasis in original). The strongest objection to Rome as the place of authorship of Philippians, is the distance between Rome and Philippi (Hawthorne 2004:xlii). Hooker (2003b:106) is correct, however, when she states that, the length of Paul's imprisonment, together with the strategic setting of Philippi, is sufficient answer to this objection. Another difficulty with Rome as the location from where Paul wrote the letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers, is his hope of visiting them upon his release from prison (Phil 2:24). According to Rom 15:22-29 Paul's intention was to visit Rome on the way to Spain. But, if Paul is indeed a prisoner in Rome at the time of writing the letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers, a long time has passed since he wrote Romans, and his plans could easily have changed since then (Hooker 2003b:106).

Presenting Ephesus as the city of origin for Paul's letter to the Jesus-followers in Philippi fails since it is based on conjecture (Hawthorne 2004:xliv). The problem with Corinth as the place of authorship of Philippians is that the theory is based solely on speculation and not on facts (Hawthorne 2004:xliv). As is the case with Rome, distance places doubt on Caesarea as the city of authorship of Philippians (Hawthorne 2004:xlvi). When Paul wrote Philippians, he was facing the possibility of death. This could only be true if Paul was either in Rome or Ephesus when he composed the letter (Hawthorne 2004:xlix-1). Wright tellingly notes that not much depends on knowing precisely where Paul wrote this letter from (2005:Kindle locations 1655-1658). Since there are so many possible venues from which Paul wrote the letter, Hawthorne (2004:pxl-pxli) suggests that we can never be exactly sure of the precise location. I prefer to maintain traditional belief - in unison with Bruce, Hooker, Joubert (2012:381), O'Brien, Müller (1955:28), Fee, Silva, Wick, Bockmuehl, Ellsworth (2004:11), and Hendriksen & Kistemaker (2001:25) - in ascribing Rome as the place of origin of Paul's letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers.

Jewish practices”, and “hostility of many surrounding pagans” who probably perceived the Philippian Jesus-followers as “religious deviants worshipping the one God who is foreign to the panoply of Greco-Roman gods” (2020:123-124). It is from within the context of these sets of challenges present both inside and outside of the Philippian community which Paul writes the letter, and, more specifically, the text of Phil 3:1-11.

According to Campbell (2020:129) Paul presents a theology of martyrdom as strategy for withstanding both the internal and the external pressures facing the Philippian community. Paul’s main strategy for addressing the challenges of disunity within the community, is to remind the Philippian Jesus-followers of the attitude of Christ (2020:126). This attitude needs to be emphasized by Paul, since, as Susan Eastman says, “differences between people, and the ensuing potential for misunderstanding and conflict, are built into Christian fellowship.” In Phil 2:6-11 Paul presents a poem which speaks of Jesus’s character¹⁰⁷. For Paul, humility - like the humility of Jesus found in this poem - will repair the unity in the Philippian community. Paul’s strategy is, however, more than just “a mere narration of Jesus’s humility and its transmission through song” (2020:127). This humility is concretely introduced into the community - as a key additional component - through a trusted mediator such as Timothy (2:19-24). “Christian leaders are to model Jesus’s virtues in person so that the community can imitate them” (2020:127).

Witherington (2011:182-183) notes the very explicit verbal parallels between the Christ-hymn and Paul’s argument in Phil 3:7-11 - ἡγήσατο/ἡγημαί (2.6; 3.7-8), μορφήν/συμμορφιζόμενος (2.7; 3.10), εὔρεθεις/εὔρεθῶ (2.8; 3.9), and Κύριος/Κυρίου (2.11; 3.8). The purpose of Paul’s argument in 3:1-11, in my opinion, is to provide an example for the Philippian ἁγίοις, “saints” (1:1), to follow. Paul is following his Master’s example of stepping down from his privileges and serving in humility, even if it leads to death and leaving the exaltation in God’s hands. The aim of this entire argument

¹⁰⁷ If Phil 1:27 is a summary of the letter’s purpose, then 2:5-11 is its heart (Lincoln 2009:156). Oakes (2001:104) asks whether, “3.4-11 is essentially shaped by 2.6-11 or whether 3.4-11 and 2.6-11 are essentially shaped by the needs of the Philippian situation.”

becomes clear in 3:17 (NIV): “Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.” As from 3:4 Paul speaks in the first person singular. His argument is based on ethos and it assumes the audience accepts Paul’s authority and is willing to follow his example. His appeal (including the autobiographical data) just like the Christ-hymn appeal has a paraenetic function - to produce mimesis, imitation.

I, therefore, believe these verbal correspondences between Phil 2:6-11 and 3:7-11¹⁰⁸ to be an essential hermeneutic key in unlocking and discovering the deepest truth of what Paul is saying in 3:7-11. Park (2007:38) goes as far as to say: “the issues addressed in Phil 2.1-11 and 3.2-11 are not two separate issues, but one and the same.”

Paula Fredriksen (2020:14) is of the opinion that the Christological pattern of self-giving (as articulated in Phil 2:6-11 and modelled by Paul and Timothy) “seems to have been consistently articulated without much sense of development or adjustment” in Paul’s letters. It served as the moral compass for all Jesus-groups. The Christological pattern of self-giving was “almost the bedrock of his pastoral theologizing, something he returned to again and again, no matter the form of the theological discourse he happened to be employing at any given point” (2020:14).

Once Paul has addressed the problem of “toxic rivalry” (Campbell 2020:127) within the community at Philippi by inviting imitation of the humility of Christ as can be seen in the example of Timothy and of Paul himself, we see a secondary strategy applied by Paul with the aim of seeing off the external threats which the Philippian community faced. For Paul, it is the “virtue of faithfulness” (2020:128) that will enable the Philippian community to successfully withstand the external pressures with which they were confronted. On at least three occasions, namely, Phil 1:25, 27 and 2:17, Paul speaks about this steadfast faithfulness. An echo of the Roman virtue of *fides* can be detected in Paul’s use of faithfulness. From 3:12-16 we can observe that Paul combines faithfulness with hope. For those who endure, a marvellous prize lies ahead.

¹⁰⁸

See also Smit in Goodacre (2013:139).

As with humility modelled in the life of Timothy, so faithfulness is presented through the life of Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25-30). Paul presents Epaphroditus to the Philippian community as a “model of steadfast courage to the point of death” (Campbell 2020:129). According to Campbell (2020:129) Paul personally models this endurance of faith on three occasions in the letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers, namely, in 1:12-26; 3:2-4:1; and 4:11-13.

Paul’s strategy for addressing the internal disunity in the Philippian community, as well as the external threats posed to the Philippian community by rival preachers, is to encourage the Jesus-followers in Philippi to imitate the humility and faithfulness of Christ (Phil 2:6-11) as can be seen in the example of Timothy (2:19-24), Epaphroditus (2:25-30), and even Paul himself (3:7-11).

2.5.2. Humility and faithfulness modelled in the life of Paul

In Phil 3:1-11 we see how Paul combined these two strategies in the way that he claims to have lived his own life, namely, humility in the example of Jesus and Timothy, and faithfulness in the example of Jesus and Epaphroditus, and presented it to the Philippian Jesus-followers as an autobiographical sketch. From Paul’s description in 3:1-11 we find Paul’s answer - presented in the form of his personal testimony - to what the Philippian community needed to do to withstand the internal and external threats which they faced, as well as how it would be possible for them to live a life characterised by these virtues of humility and faithfulness. I am of the opinion that Paul, by means of the personal testimony given in 3:1-11, not only indicates the faithfulness needed to withstand the external threats to the community of faithfulness in Philippi - as Campbell so aptly illustrated - but also of the humility needed to achieve and maintain internal unity among the Philippian Jesus-followers. Finally, in 3:1-11 Paul presents the Philippian Jesus-followers with an answer as to how it is possible for them to live a life of humility and faithfulness. These virtues of humility and faithfulness, ultimately, flow from Jesus. Jesus is, therefore, the example and the source of the humility and faithfulness of any Jesus-follower. Mimesis of the kenosis of Christ (as presented in 2:6-

11) is exemplified in the life of Paul in his willingness “to consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (3:8). The righteousness from God is made available through the faithfulness of Jesus (3:9) to “the point of death, an event that was followed by his glorious resurrection” (Campbell 2020:128).

2.5.3. “For it is we who are the circumcision”

I now suggest that Phil 3:3 can be fruitfully viewed as Paul’s attempt to put forward a condensed statement regarding the identity of God’s people (in the context of the letter), but also of Paul’s concern regarding boasting in “the flesh”. If my suggestion is of any value, I also believe that 3:3 can be fruitfully applied in order to obtain deeper insight into the logical flow of Paul’s argument in this text. When 3:3 is read in combination with our knowledge of the situation in Philippi, as well as with Paul’s strategy for addressing this situation (as discussed in this section until now), it holds forth great promise in assisting us in our understanding of the argumentative texture of 3:1-11. In what follows in the rest of this section, I will present some suggestions and insights regarding the literary and rhetorical aspects of 3:3. Finally, I will bring these suggestions and insights into (what I hope will prove to be) a fruitful dialogue with our knowledge of the situation in Philippi, as well as Paul’s strategy for addressing this situation. This dialogue should assist us in our understanding of the argumentative texture of 3:1-11.

In Phil 3:3 Paul says: ἡμεῖς γάρ ἐσμεν ἡ περιτομή, οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες, “for it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who have not put confidence in the flesh”. By means of his application of a chiastic structure, Paul balances the three insults in 3:2 by the three statements about Jesus-followers in 3:3 (Harvey 1998:240)¹⁰⁹. In line with Paul’s earlier

¹⁰⁹ O’Brien (1991:362-363) points out that the third phrase is a negative restatement of the preceding, and signifies that Jesus-followers, who do have grounds for boasting, “have no confidence in the flesh”. The two clauses stand in a chiastic relationship.

reference to the family created by the work of God in and through Jesus (3:1), Duling (2008:814) notes that Paul believed that he had entered another *ethnos*, which had its own boundaries, its own values, and its own symbols in Christ. This *ethnos*, however, was not specified as rooted in *genos* from Israel, the *phylos* of Benjamin, the Hebrew culture, the norms of Torah, and the rite of circumcision. It was a different sort of *ethnos*.

Paul is pointing out the false understanding that the “mutilators” (Phil 3:2) have of the salvation of God in Christ Jesus (O’Brien 1991:359)¹¹⁰. Christ and the Spirit ensure entry into the covenant people of God¹¹¹. Not “circumcision”, or, as Paul prefers to call it in 3:2, “mutilation.” Gorman (2014:203) says that the purpose of Jesus’ death was to give birth to this new covenant. This covenant is identified by a community of Spirit-filled disciples of Jesus who would fulfil the inseparable covenantal requirements of faithfulness to God and love for others through participation in the death of Jesus.

Paul’s comparing of one way with another - as he does in Phil 3:3 - is called “rhetorical *synkrisis*”¹¹² (Witherington III 2011:192). Paul’s switch to the personal pronoun first person plural “we” (ἡμεῖς) instead of second- and third-person personal pronouns raises many possibilities for the identity of this group. The first is that, Paul refers to all Jewish Jesus-followers. This would be a strange reference since most readers of the letter were gentiles and would thus be excluded from the privileges Paul describes here (O’Brien 1991:359). Second, that Paul refers to all gentile Jesus-followers. This is not the best possibility, since Paul himself would then be excluded (1991:358). Third, that Paul is referring to all followers of Christ Jesus - Jews and gentiles alike, namely, the church of Jesus Christ (Hawthorne 2004:175). This seems to be the better reading of the phrase. As

¹¹⁰ See also Fee (1995:Kindle locations 8601-8605).

¹¹¹ “The Torah was a wonderful, glorious thing, as far superior to the codes of other peoples as the sun is to the moon. It was holy, just and good, given for a purpose, for a time; and with the Messiah the time was up. All that was there in Torah that God intended to be of permanent value and intention has been transformed into the life of Messiah and Spirit” (Wright 2011:265; see also Stumpff 1964:890).

¹¹² This is a form of speech which contrasts the better with the worse (Witherington III 2011:192).

our investigation of the repetitive texture of 3:1-11 indicated, the deepest sense of this notion is thus the identification of the people of God.

Paul goes on to describe the characteristics of this group of people - the περιτομή - namely, “we who worship by the Spirit of God” (οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες). In this section I will discuss the intertexture of Phil 3:3, with a specific focus on oral-scribal intertexture.

Firstly, I will discuss the term λατρεύοντες. The term λατρεύοντες, “worship”, gets its use from the temple context of service to God (Fee 1995:Kindle locations 8618-8624)¹¹³. The nature of this worship is described by Hawthorne (2004:176) as a life of love and service, which generates a life for others¹¹⁴. Strong (2009:44) defines λατρεύειν as “to serve, do the service, or worship”. Strathmann (1964:62) indicates that the word is found twenty-one times in the New Testament - four of which is found in Paul’s letters, namely, in Rom 1:9, 25; Phil 3:3; and 2 Tim 1:3. In the LXX the word is never used in reference to human relations. The word λατρεύειν is always directed at God and is an Old Testament cultic concept which is spiritualized in the New Testamen (1964:65).

Secondly, the phrase οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ, “the Spirit of God”, needs clarification. According to Schweizer (1964a:424-432) the twofold nature of life in and by πνεῦμα is best described in Gal 5:25 (NIV): “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” Negatively, living in the πνεῦμα means renouncing the “flesh”, whilst positively it implies standing in openness for God and one’s neighbour. Jesus-followers do not live from their own power, but from another source, namely, the Spirit. They also accept that they have to fashion their lives in reliance on this power, rather than on their own (Gal 3). In Gal 4:6 and Rom 8:15, 26 Paul notes that the ethical function of the πνεῦμα is the same as the soteriological: the same πνεῦμα which confirms our status as a family member of God, enables us to live therein (1964a:424-432). Gal 5:13-25 clearly and powerfully states what is the fruit of this πνεῦμα. Being free from “the flesh” means being made free by “the Spirit” to love

¹¹³ See Marshall (1991:80-81).

¹¹⁴ See Haight (2014:160).

others and God. 1 Cor 12-14 helps us to understand that the $\pi\nu\epsilon\tilde{\upsilon}\mu\alpha$ is the source of spiritual gifts with the main aim of edifying the community. The $\pi\nu\epsilon\tilde{\upsilon}\mu\alpha$ is also the promise of future glory for Jesus-followers (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5) and because of this, it is the basis of hope (Rom 5:5). The $\pi\nu\epsilon\tilde{\upsilon}\mu\alpha$ characterizes the new covenant (2 Cor 3:6, Rom 2:29 & 7:6) (Kremer 1990c:120). The Spirit prays for the Jesus-followers: “*By the Spirit*; by his assistance, inspiration: ‘We know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us’ (Rom 8:26)” (Spence-Jones 1909:112) (emphasis in original).

Henco van der Westhuizen (2013), in analysing the work of Michael Welker on the Holy Spirit, succeeds in pointing out that, for Welker, the Spirit is both “selfloos” (selfless) and “sosiaal” (social). These two categories place an emphasis on the soteriological, as well as the ethical function of the Spirit.

First, according to Welker, the Spirit is the Spirit of the crucified and risen Christ. Christ on the cross as the ultimate example of selflessness - with the Holy Spirit being the Spirit of Christ - marks the Holy Spirit as selfless. Furthermore, this social Spirit - the Spirit poured out on the flesh - fulfils the law, righteousness and knowledge of God (van der Westhuizen 2013:26). The work of the Spirit also forms a new community of God’s people; the work of the Spirit is not simply on the level of individual soteriology (2013:437).

Second, even though the Spirit does have a soteriological function, it also has an ethical one. Soteriologically the Spirit is a sign of the new covenant. The Spirit marks Jesus-followers as a part of God’s family. The Spirit is also the sign of our eschatological hope. Ethically the Spirit enables us to stand openly before God and each other. The Spirit is the dynamic source of the life of Jesus-followers. This is the Spirit of Christ which enables us to serve God. Service to God finds true expression in service to others. The Spirit, in the words of Welker, is, therefore, truly selfless and social. For Welker, people who are formed into this type of community are characterized by self-criticism, a social sensitivity and a social critique (van der Westhuizen 2013:303). The Spirit is the

Spirit of Christ and this Spirit makes the believer one with Christ in his crucifixion and resurrection (2013:438).

It is enlightening to make a connection between Paul's preferred form of address for the Philippian Jesus-followers, ἀδελφοί μου, "my family", in Phil 3:1 and his reference to the Spirit in 3:3. Paul's argument in 3:1 is that he and his supporters belonged to one another with a family identity (Wright 2013a:Kindle locations 1663-1664). Hellerman (2009:15) highlights Paul's plea with the Philippian Jesus-followers to live as a family of brothers and sisters in Christ. An inclusive community of Jesus-followers is at the heart of who God is. It is not an "optional extra" (Harkness 2012:126).

But, if all of Paul's surviving letters were addressed to "ex-pagan pagans" (Fredriksen 2020:33&39), how is it possible for Paul, as a Jew (see Phil 3:4-6 for Paul's emphasis on his Jewish heritage and achievements) to refer to the pagan (ἔθνη) Jesus-followers in Philippi with familial language? Given the absence in Paul's day of "a religiously neutral ethnicity" (2020:33), and that "for ancient peoples, ethnicity coordinated heaven and earth" (2020:34), what convinced Paul otherwise in the case of these pagan Philippian Jesus-followers? Paula Fredriksen argues that "according to the flesh", κατὰ σάρκα, gentiles were naturally of a different family. These gentiles could, however, be brought into the Jewish family, namely, God's family, "according to Spirit", κατὰ πνεῦμα. Regarding this crucial aspect of his distinctive Jewish message, Paul thought like a Roman. Roman legal culture allowed a form of fictive kinship by means of adoption. "Paul creatively repurposed these Roman legal protocols to articulate Jewish eschatological ends ... Through immersion into Christ, ex-pagan pagans in Pauline communities received pneuma, variously described as the 'spirit of God' or as 'the spirit of Christ' or simply as 'holy spirit'. Spirit made 'sons'" (2020:41-42). Through adoption by the Spirit, Paul can call the Philippian Jesus-followers ἀδελφοί μου, "my family". Right after this form of address in 3:1, Paul urges the Philippian Jesus-followers

to χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ, “rejoice in the Lord”¹¹⁵. One will be hard-pressed to conjure up a more fitting response - χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ - to adopted kinship as implied in Paul’s address of the Philippian Jesus-followers as ἀδελφοί μου.

In the following three paragraphs, I momentarily shift attention to some social and cultural aspects involved in the first-century Roman world that are important for making sense of Paul’s argument here. Insight into the dynamics of honour and shame, voluntary associations, as well as the dynamics of friendship in the first-century Roman world should provide us with the additional benefit of not only understanding the term ἀδελφοί from a Jewish perspective (as I have done up to now), but also from the perspective of the everyday lives of the Philippian Jesus-followers in the Roman colony of Philippi¹¹⁶.

The first social and cultural category is that of honour and shame. Ancient Mediterranean culture was a vehemently competitive environment, what Malina (1993) and others call an agonistic society, in which almost any social interchange created an arena in which people strive to enhance their honour at someone else’s expense (Hellerman 2009:15-16). The pursuit of honour was a strong-group endeavour in ancient times - this was not an individual endeavour (2009:16). Of these groups, the family took pride of place. Within this family another ethos prevailed entirely. The honour game was “off-limits” (2009:16). For those individuals who converted to Christianity these ancient Mediterranean values posed a very interesting challenge: would they give priority to their surrogate family in Christ by honouring their brothers and sisters in Christ who did not share their blood, or would they remain loyal to their blood family instead? The data from early Christian literature shows that the results were mixed - at best (2009:16). Paul’s desire was to establish a relational ethos among Jesus-followers in the community by which competition for honour among persons who took

¹¹⁵ Swift (1984:235) believes that joy is the prevailing mood of the epistle, not its central theme. Ben Witherington III (2011:188) says that the affective thrust of the rhetorical discourse in Phil 3:1, is the call to rejoice in the Lord. This joy is a very “realistic” joy - in the sense of joy as it is described in the Psalms (Fee 1995:Kindle locations 8522-8526).

¹¹⁶ Philippi was a colonized Roman city settled by Roman soldiers (Ascough 2020:49).

seriously their identity as brothers and sisters in Christ would be discouraged. Family members in Christ are not in competition with each other for higher honours¹¹⁷.

The second social and cultural category is that of voluntary associations. Richard Ascough (2003:160) highlights another important aspect of the social context of Paul's Philippian readers - a community which he refers to as a "religious association." According to Ascough (2003:122) the Philippian Jesus-followers were mostly either slaves or freed and free persons, for whom participation in the marketplace was an everyday experience and an integral part of their social world. Paul's use of marketplace and trade metaphors concerns the ordinary practices of common merchants, not the high finance of the elite (2003:118)¹¹⁸. This makeup of the Philippian congregation draws parallels with the makeup of the voluntary associations, both in Macedonia and elsewhere (2003:129). The differences between the associations and the community of Jesus-followers at Philippi, as advocated by Paul, are telling (2003:129-161): no competing or honor and shame within the community of Jesus-followers; no adopting of the typical behavior of the voluntary associations, namely, indulgence in food and drink and banqueting; or the sending of money to another group (2003:153).

The third social and religious category is that of linkage groups. John Fitzgerald (2007) confirms that, even though Paul never uses the words *φιλία* (friendship) or *φίλος* (friend) in his writings, implicitly the concept of friendship functions very strongly in the writings of the apostle. This becomes clearly visible when the reader takes into account Paul's frequent use of "linkage

¹¹⁷ This same type of honouring was also done between friends. Paul cultivates both of these categories - friendship and family - among the Jesus-followers in Philippi in order to get them to honour each other: "For the epigraphic data suggests that friends honored friends in Philippi. We may reasonably conclude that Paul sought intentionally to engender and cultivate two social contexts among his converts - family and friendship - each of which had the potential, at least, to create a community in which individuals preferred one another in honor" (Hellerman 2009:20).

¹¹⁸ Furthermore, Paul's mentioning of certain individuals by name in the letter accentuates this point: "The composition of the Philippian Christian community from the lower ranks is indicated in the few names that are mentioned in the letter ... and the reference to affiliation with members of Caesar's household. The lack of Paul's specific mention of anyone of higher status probably indicates that no such persons existed within the Philippian Christian community" (Ascough 2003:128-129).

In the community of Jesus-followers in Corinth (see 1 Cor 1:14-16) and in Rome (see Romans 16:1-2), their might have, though, been some members counting among the *humiliores*, "a category of people who controlled considerable amounts of money" (Ascough 2020:52).

groups”¹¹⁹ (2007:288). Paul’s reference to “being joyful” (χαίρετε in Phil 3:1) and “fellowship” ([τὴν] κοινωνίαν in 3:10) form part of the linkage groups. According to Fitzgerald (2007:294) chapter three of Philippians is “replete with terms and techniques ... that constitute the opposite of friendship, namely, enmity (3.18).”

From this mention of the social and cultural aspects of honour and shame, voluntary associations, as well as linkage groups, it is important to highlight that the Spirit, and not the flesh, is what brings Jesus-followers together in God’s family. This is a family characterised not by competition for honour, but by friendship. The functions of the Spirit are: 1) the Spirit confirms the identity of God’s people through adoption of all - irrespective of their ethnos and genos - who are faithful to Jesus as the Christ and Lord. The Spirit, then, has a soteriological function in the life of the Jesus-follower. 2) The Spirit also has an ethical function, namely, the Spirit is the source of power of the life of a Jesus-follower within the loving community of Jesus-followers as friends. 3) Finally, the Spirit is the basis of the future hope of the resurrection for all Jesus-followers. I am of the opinion that all three of these functions of the Spirit is present in the passage in Phil 3:1-11.

Thirdly, in addition to λατρεύοντες, and the phrase οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ, Paul continues his description of the characteristics of the περιτομή in Phil 3:3 when he says: καυχόμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, “who glory in Christ Jesus”. This phrase indicates full confidence and trust in something or someone¹²⁰ (Fee 1995:Kindle locations 8643-8644). Καυχάομαι can be defined as to boast, glory, joy, rejoice (Strong 2009:41). This is a favourite term of Paul’s. However, Paul uses the verb καυχᾶσθαι, “to boast,” only once in Philippians (the noun καύχημα, “boasting,” is in 1:26, 2:16). He

¹¹⁹ “When applied to concepts, the expression ‘linkage group’ indicates that particular terms and ideas have remained associated with one another through a number of generations. This notion has the useful function of reminding us that antiquity’s notions about particular subjects were rarely, if ever, held in isolation ... This is particularly true of concepts such as friendship” (Fitzgerald 2007:288). See Fitzgerald 2007:284-296 for details on Paul’s use of friendship linkage group words in his letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers.

¹²⁰ “As is the case already in the LXX (cf., e.g., Ps 48:7) the motif of trust is inherent in Paul’s use of the term ‘boast.’ In boasting the individual declares what he relies on and what is his support in life, i.e., what his life is built on. Thus for Paul there are two alternative and mutually exclusive ways of boasting (cf. esp. Phil 3:3). The Christian rejects any kind of boasting by which one is supported by the flesh, outward existence, other people, or himself (1 Cor 1:29; 3:21; Gal 6:13, etc.). This rejection is rooted in the theology of justification, as it is developed by Paul esp. in Romans” (Zmijewski 1990:278). (See also 1 & 2 Corinthians, as well as Galatians for an expansion of this theme).

uses it at least thirty times in his letters, and other New Testament writers only use it twice (Hawthorne 2004:176)¹²¹. Nothing more needs to be done for these Jesus-followers in Philippi to be part of God's covenant family: they need only place their *καυχώμενοι* in *Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*. In the analysis of the inner texture of 3:1-11, it was indicated that "Christ" refers to Israel's Messiah, that is, God's anointed one.

The meaning of the preposition *ἐν*, in the phrase *ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*, is sometimes disputed. Does "in Christ Jesus" refer to the sphere of reference, the cause of boasting, or the object of the exultation? O'Brien (1991:362) emphasizes that in light of the frequent LXX usage where *ἐν* after *καυχάομαι* points to the one in whom the exultation occurs, together with Paul's citing of Jer 9:21 at 1 Cor 1:31 and 2 Cor 10:17 with the meaning, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord", *καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ* ought probably to be taken as speaking of Christ Jesus as the one in whom we boast; in other words, he is the object of our boasting. O'Brien (1991:362) cautions, however, that, perhaps, too fine a distinction should not be made in this instance. Much the same as in Phil 3:1, Christ is the object, as well as the ground for boasting in 3:3. Zmijewski (1990:276) confirms this noting that *ἐν* with the dative, as is the case here, give the object or basis of boasting¹²².

Fourthly, in addition to *λατρεύοντες*, the phrase *οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ*, and *καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*, Paul characterizes those who are the circumcision in Phil 3:3 as: *καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες*, "and not having put confidence in the flesh." From the investigation of the inner texture of 3:1-11 under the section on ethnocentric covenantalism and achievements, *σάρξ*, "flesh", was presented as referring to a life outside of and apart from Christ, to physical circumcision, and also to a fundamental misunderstanding of God's economy of salvation. Jesus-followers, says Paul, does not place their confidence in these things.

¹²¹ See also Louw & Nida (1995:93-94).

¹²² Gorman (2004:Kindle locations 1491-1500) draws our attention to what he calls "mutual indwelling" between Christ and the believer. While Paul speaks frequently of being in Christ, he also speaks of Jesus-followers having the risen Christ living within them. "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20; cf. Rom. 8:10). One of the chief hallmarks, then, of Paul's spirituality is this life of mutual indwelling between Christ and Jesus-followers that results in conformity to Christ.

Paul's argument in Phil 3:3, as a condensed statement regarding the identity of God's people, but also of Paul's concern regarding boasting in "the flesh", can be presented in the following manner: proselyte circumcision is not a necessity to be a part of God's people. We are God's people: all who serve God with their whole being through his Spirit (this Spirit confirms your status as a member of God's new covenant family, and enables you to live as a member of this family; the Spirit is also the basis of your hope for future resurrection); all who put their confidence and trust in Jesus as God's anointed; all who does not put their trust in circumcision, namely, mutilation, nor in a misunderstanding of God's economy of salvation which is based on heritage and achievements.

This is the strategy that Paul presents for addressing the internal disunity and the external pressure created by opposition teachers facing the Philippian Jesus-followers: Christ Jesus is their example of humility and faithfulness. Jesus and the Spirit is also their source of humility and faithfulness. Through Christ and the Spirit, the Philippian Jesus-followers are adopted into God's covenant family. Therefore, the Philippian Jesus-followers can now imitate the humility and faithfulness of Jesus in their own lives. I propose that Paul presents the Philippian Jesus-followers with an example in Phil 3:4-11 of what his life of humility and faithfulness looks like, as well as what the hoped-for end-result is of such a life. Snyman (2006:279) describes Paul's rhetorical strategy in 3:4-11 as using an argument from his own experience to reiterate the contrast between two kinds of righteousness. In 3:1-11 Paul describes what the eschatological Israel looks like, namely, Jews and Greeks alike standing in a new covenantal relationship with God (Lietaert Peerbolte 2012:7).

We will only focus on the desires and the telos of a life of humility and faithfulness - as Paul describes it in Phil 3:7-11 - in more detail in our analysis of the ideological texture of 3:1-11. I am of the opinion that Paul's description of his desires (in the form of his personal testimony in 3:7-10), as well as Paul's description of his future hope (3:11) presents the reader with the ideological matrix of his life in the present.

For our immediate purposes, however, I will finish off the investigation of the inner texture of Phil 3:1-11 by exploring some aspects into the sensory-aesthetic texture of 3:1-11. An appreciation of the sensory-aesthetic texture in 3:1-11 assist us in answering the question: how does Paul's logical argument in 3:1-11 challenge his readers to reconsider traditional and unconsciously adhered to networks of meaning?

2.6. Sensory-aesthetic texture

In Phil 3:1-11 Paul creates tension with the language that he uses - a tension which calls for "reassessment and self-criticism" (Robbins 1996b:65). This reassessment and self-criticism evoke new "convictions, dispositions, and actions." (1996b:65). The inner texture of 3:1-11 guides the reader by means of "networks of signification" to realign networks of meaning which are traditionally and unconsciously adhered to (1996b:65). Phil 3:1-11, then, also has to do with people's imagination. Can the Philippian Jesus-followers imagine new possibilities for their lives? How do they imagine the present concrete realities of their lives in the light of their past and their future?

Longenecker (2020b:171-186) asks an important question in an essay entitled *What did Paul Think is Wrong in God's World?* For Longenecker, Paul's answer is multi-layered: suprahuman powers, cultural power, and human sinfulness - all of which create relational dysfunction - are three aspects highlighting what is wrong with God's world. Given the negative relational impact of these three aspects, the first-century Jewish communities were receptive to re-imaging an answer to the question: what is God doing about what is wrong? Paul's answer to this question, namely, the "Christ-event" (Gorman 2020:188-190), provided rich resources which assisted the early Jesus-followers in their quest to find meaning. Paul's description in 3:1-11, I suggest, provides us with a description of the Christ-event¹²³, as well as of the implications of this event for all the Jesus-followers in Philippi.

¹²³ I am aware that the description of the Christ-event in Phil 3:1-11 is only a partial description. The initial coming of Jesus is not incorporated in Paul's description in 3:1-11 as it is, say, in 2:6-11. Paul's description of the death and the

According to Paul, neither Jewish law, nor political entities or human effort can fix what is wrong in God's world (2020:188). God's action in the initial coming, death and resurrection of Jesus restores humanity and the relational dysfunction which characterizes humanity.

Paul's description of this Christ-event and its implications for the Jesus-followers in Philippi would have created tension within them. From the analysis of the inner texture under the section of repetitive texture, it was presented that Paul's focus in Phil 3:1-11 is very much on a specific understanding of the law. Even though this can be described as Paul's primary focus in 3:1-11, such an amended understanding (of what we describe as soteriology¹²⁴) would also have had a significant impact on the lives of the Philippians in the Roman. As our investigation of the progressive texture presented, Fredriksen (2020:43) has argued that it is precisely because the Philippian Jesus-followers gave their loyalty to Jesus (in the amended form of Paul's gospel), that both they and Paul paid a price:

“As adopted heirs, these ex-pagans had specific responsibilities to their (new) patrilineal cult and to their new family's god - the same, indeed, as those of ‘born’ sons, Israel. Like Jews in the Diaspora, then, so too God's ‘new’ sons: these people could no longer participate in civic cult to local deities, nor sacrifice before those deities' images. In the eyes of the *ekklēsia*, they may have been ‘eschatological gentiles’, but in the eyes of their unaffiliated neighbours, they were deviant pagans. In this way they threatened majority culture's ‘friendly agreement’ between heaven and earth.”

Is it possible for the Philippian Jesus-followers to be moved from *καίπερ ἐγὼ ἔχων πεποίθησιν καὶ ἐν σαρκί. Εἴ τις δοκεῖ ἄλλος πεποιθέναι ἐν σαρκί, ἐγὼ μᾶλλον*, “though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more”, to a position characterised as follows: *ἡμεῖς γάρ ἐσμεν ἡ περιτομή, οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες καὶ*

resurrection of Jesus, as well as his description of the implications of this for the life of a Jesus-follower, is forcefully present in 3:1-11.

¹²⁴ “Phil. 3:4–11 does not relate the Damascus event to Paul's apostolic mission (as in Gal 1). Rather, his testimony deals with soteriology, especially with reference to the law, righteousness, and one's relationship to Christ. The listing of his former credentials in vv. 4–6 serves as a foil for his positive theological exposition of vv. 7–11” (O'Brien 1991:366).

καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες, “for it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh”? Paul’s answer was that the humility and faithfulness of Jesus - suggested by Paul as the strategy for addressing the relational dysfunction within the Philippian community of Jesus-followers, as well as the pressure exerted on the community from outside by opposition teachers - was also provided by Christ (Phil 3:3&9) and the Spirit (3:3). This is a process of transformation (3:7-11). Attention to the sensory-aesthetic texture of 3:1-11 thus shows that Paul’s call to the Philippian Jesus-followers to conduct themselves worthy of the gospel of Christ (1:27), is indeed possible because of two realities, namely, Christ and the Spirit of God. A life characterized by humility and faithfulness, instead of a competition for honour, is possible because of Christ and the Spirit.

In chapter three in the section on ideological texture I will further flesh out these questions, as well as the characteristics and desires of God’s restored people in more details.

3. Conclusion

In this chapter I presented an analysis of the inner texture of Phil 3:1-11. Inner texture was discussed under six headings, namely, repetition, progression, opening-middle-closing texture, narrational texture, argumentative texture, and sensory-aesthetic texture.

On a macro-level four important dynamics were presented in this chapter. First, our investigation of the opening-middle-closing texture of the slightly truncated section of Phil 3:1-11 suggested that the letter’s chief value for theological interpretation may be found in the way in which it portrays a view of what it means to live as a Jesus-follower within a pagan society. Paul describes this suggestion in 1:27 (NIV): “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” Second, it was suggested in the analysis of sensory-aesthetic texture that suprahuman powers, cultural power, and human sinfulness - all of which create relational dysfunction

between God and human beings, as well as between human beings themselves - are three aspects which highlight what is wrong with God's world according to Paul. Third, in the investigation of the argumentative texture of 3:1-11, the situation in Philippi which led to the construction of the letter was presented on three levels: 1) relational dysfunction on a leadership level; 2) pressure from opposing Jewish teachers; 3) hostility from surrounding gentiles. The challenges facing the Jesus-followers in Philippi were, I suggest, the results of the three dysfunctional forms of power referred to in the investigation of the sensory-aesthetic texture of 3:1-11. Finally, in the section on argumentative texture it was also suggested that Paul presents a theology of martyrdom as strategy for withstanding both the internal and the external pressures facing the Philippian community. This theology of martyrdom finds primary expression in the humility and faithfulness of Jesus as Paul presents it in 2:6-11. Through Paul's presentation of the examples of Timothy (humility in 2:19-24) and Epaphroditus (faithfulness in 2:25-30) the Jesus-followers in Philippi received examples from the lives of fellow Jesus-followers of a theology of martyrdom. This, I believe, is what it means for the Jesus-followers in Philippi to live a life in accordance with 1:27. In 3:1-11 Paul also presents his own life as an example of the humility and faithfulness of Jesus.

On a micro-level the text of Phil 3:1-11 presents two further important dynamics in this chapter. First, from the analysis of the repetitive texture of 3:1-11 it was suggested that Jesus, as Christ and Lord, is the primary subject of Paul's autobiographical sketch. Paul emphasizes the identity of Jesus in 3:1-11, he is God's anointed Messiah-King and the true Ruler of the whole world. Paul also presents a specific understanding of the law, namely, ethnocentric covenantalism in 3:1-11. By means of terminology from financial accounting Paul states that ethnocentric covenantalism is "loss" (3:7-8) and that Jesus is "gain" (3:7-8). Second, from the investigation of the progressive texture it was suggested that Paul, even though he presents his ethnocentric covenantal past as perfect (3:4b-6), warned the Jesus-followers in Philippi of the dangers posed by the Judaizing opponents (3:2) who preached a message largely in line with Paul's past beliefs. Paul also confirms that he considers everything as excrement that he may gain Christ (3:8). The main point of disagreement between Paul

and these opponents, I suggest, is their incessant insistence on proselyte circumcision for gentile Jesus-followers to become a part of God's covenantal family. Circumcision, according to Paul, is not a necessity for being adopted into God's covenantal family. Christ-centric covenantalism (3:9) is what is needed, through service to God and others in the Spirit, without boasting in the flesh (3:3).

The main aim in chapter three which now follows, is to investigate the ideological texture, as well as the sacred texture of Phil 3:1-11, building on what was established already in chapter two.

Chapter three

A Socio-Rhetorical Reading of the Ideological Texture and the Sacred Texture of Phil 3:1-11

1. Introduction

As explained previously, my exegetical approach to the biblical text of Phil 3:1-11 is based on the socio-rhetorical criticism of Vernon K. Robbins. In the introduction to chapter two I indicated that socio-rhetorical criticism explores five different angles within texts (Robbins 1996a:2). Robbins differentiates between inner texture and intertexture and from these two categories he identifies five textures, namely, inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture (1996:238a). In chapter two, I presented a socio-rhetorical approach to the inner texture of 3:1-11.

In this chapter I will now also investigate the ideological texture, as well as the sacred texture of Phil 3:1-11. In the introduction to chapter two, ideological texture was defined as “the biases, opinions, preferences, and stereotypes of a particular writer and a particular reader” (Robbins 1996a:95). The ideological texture provides the reader with insight into the inner nature of multiple power plays at work in the discourse of a text. Sacred texture (1996a:4) refers to the manner in which a text communicates insights into the relationship between the human and the divine. This texture includes aspects concerning deity, holy persons, spirit beings, divine history, human redemption, human commitment, religious community, and ethics. The sacred texture provides the reader with

insight into the manner in which a text communicates regarding the relationship between the human and the divine.

An analysis of the ideological texture of Phil 3:1-11 should present the reader with insight into what - for Paul - presented the key to history, whilst an appreciation of the sacred texture of 3:1-11 provides the reader with insight into Paul's depiction of the reality and nature of the deity and the response of human beings in relation to the deity. I will conclude this chapter by presenting my translation - with a brief description of the logic involved in my exegetical and hermeneutical choices - of the Greek text of 3:1-11.

2. Ideological texture

Every text and the interpretation of that text communicates a particular point of view (Robbins 1996b:239). Ideological texture analyses the nature of the power struggles in the context of the social and cultural systems in the discourse. The goal, for the commentator, should be to display the inner nature of multiple power plays at work in any discourse through interdisciplinary strategies of analysis and interpretation (1996b:234)¹²⁵. Socio-rhetorical analysis of ideological texture focuses on four arenas of ideology: 1) in texts; 2) in authoritative traditions of interpretation; 3) in intellectual discourse; and 4) in individuals and groups (1996b:240). Amidst various understandings of ideology, for our purposes an ideology "differs from a simple opinion in that it claims to possess either the key to history, or the solution for all the 'riddles of the universe,' or the intimate knowledge of the hidden universal laws, which are supposed to rule nature and man" (Arendt 1968:159)¹²⁶. For Paul, the key to history was the gospel, namely, God's action in Jesus Christ. God's action in Jesus, regularly referred to as the Christ-event, is the initial coming, as well as the death, the resurrection and the

¹²⁵ Robbins (1996b:234-235) discourages the use of eclectic or subdisciplinary strategies in the event of interpreting a biblical text. This type of commentary, he believes, leads the reader to draw false conclusions.

¹²⁶ The classic distinction in ideology is that of Marx (false consciousness) and Mannheim (worldview).

exaltation of Jesus. Margaret Mitchell says that Paul's letters "contain complex and impassioned arguments about the meaning and implications of the *euangelion*, past, present, and future, which Paul audaciously regarded as the key to the meaning of all cosmic history and each human life" (2020:286).

In the section on sensory-aesthetic texture our investigation emphasized the tension that the Philippian Jesus-followers would have experienced on several levels due to Paul's argument on "soteriology" in Phil 3:1-11 (with a specific reference to 3:7-11). Paul's invitation to the Philippian Jesus-followers to re-imagine the nature of their loyalty and fidelity to Jesus and the implications of this in their everyday lives - both inside and outside of their community of fellow Jesus-followers - would have been significant. Our analysis of the ideological texture of 3:1-11 does not seek to dissolve this tension experienced by the Philippian Jesus-followers, but rather to accentuate this tension by focusing on the desires and the telos of a life of humility and faithfulness (as it was presented in the section on argumentative texture) as Paul presented them in 3:7-11. I am of the opinion that, for the Philippians to succeed in remaining faithful to Jesus, namely, to conduct themselves worthy of the gospel of Christ (1:27), they had to be encouraged to welcome this tension as the creative matrix for their lives as Jesus-followers¹²⁷.

As could be seen from the investigation of the opening-middle-closing texture of Phil 3:1-11, Paul is in the stimulation mode in 3:4b-6. In 3:4-6,¹²⁸ Paul uses a form which "is somewhat reminiscent of epideictic oratory - a speech form designed to praise or blame" (Hawthorne 2004:182). This section of the letter is linked to the previous by *πεποίθησιν* (*πεποιθότες* in 3:3) (2004:182). From there Paul inverts his values (3:7) and, finally, he renews the proposition of 3:7 in 3:8-11. I am of the opinion that Paul's ideological texture is presented in a thick and deep manner in 3:7-11. Paul uses literary strategies in 3:7-11 similar to those seen in 3:1-3: short verbless phrases, rhythmic

¹²⁷ I am of the opinion that Paul does this on many different levels in this letter. On a macro-level it could, for instance, be argued that the atmosphere of joy which pervades the letter - despite Paul's own imprisonment, as well as the challenges facing the Philippian Jesus-followers - serves as a confirmation of this view.

¹²⁸ Smit (2013:122) refers to Paul as the "Superdog" in this passage.

expressions, chiasm, polysyndeton, and hapax legomena (2004:182-183). According to Wiersbe (1996:85) Paul becomes an auditor in 3:4-11 and finds that he was, before his faithfulness to Christ, bankrupt¹²⁹. This, I propose, is Paul's ideological matrix in 3:1-11. I will now discuss, in short, some key aspects of Paul's ideological position from the framework of the dynamics of power.

2.1. Paul and power

As I discussed in the sensory-aesthetic texture section, Longenecker (2020b:171-186) asks an important question: what did Paul think is wrong in God's world? According to Longenecker (2020b:185), "Paul's most pronounced assessments of what is wrong in God's world cohere around the word 'power.'" Longenecker highlights three aspects of this "conglomeration of power" (2020b:185). Firstly, Paul often highlighted¹³⁰ how "suprahuman forces"¹³¹ enslaved human beings in their relationships with God and with others. Secondly, on at least one occasion¹³², Paul is critical of the so-called promises of unity and security provided by a form of cultural power which he labels as a false gospel. Thirdly, for Paul, human beings are sinners and powerless to get themselves out of this despairingly dysfunctional situation in which they are fully immersed (2020b:185). Longenecker then ends his discussion by asking more captivating questions: "What can God do about it? Is God up to the job of being sovereign, or have the cosmic powers proved to be too powerful, overwhelming the divine initiatives and sinking God's good creation into a perpetual downward spiral of moral and relational chaos? What can God do about all this?" (2020b:185-186).

In the following paragraph, I will discuss the ways in which Paul's words in Phil 3:8-11

¹²⁹ See Wiersbe (1992:566-567).

¹³⁰ See, e.g., Gal 4:1-11; 1 Cor 15; Rom 5:12-21; Eph 6:12.

¹³¹ This term refers to "spiritual realities" exercising "their power within human affairs, having intentionality and purpose to effect outcomes" (Longenecker 2020b:171).

¹³² See 1 Thess 5:3.

provides an answer to these questions.

2.2. Paul the convert

From the analysis of progressive texture, I indicated that Paul evaluates his prior beliefs and his prior way of life in Phil 3:7-8. Through this evaluation Paul comes to an understanding of his past which he progressively describes in more negative terms. Paul starts off by saying - in a reference to the list of heritage and achievements in 3:4b-6 - “but whatever was to my profit I now consider loss because of Christ” (3:7), and he ends up by saying “everything is excrement” (3:8) - ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω, “that I may gain Christ.” Phil 3:8-11 is one long sentence in Greek. Even though 3:7-8 go together in terms of its description of Paul’s past in progressively negative terms, 3:8 also functions as a bridge in Paul’s thought-process in the rest of the passage of 3:1-11. As from 3:8 Paul’s thoughts shift from the past into the present and on into the future. I will now highlight important literary and rhetorical aspects of 3:8-9. This should provide a foundation for a better understanding of the desires and the telos of a life of humility and faithfulness in the present and on into the future.

Paul’s full description in Phil 3:8 is as follows: ἀλλὰ μενοῦνγε καὶ ἡγοῦμαι πάντα ζημίαν εἶναι διὰ τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου, δι’ ὃν τὰ πάντα ἐζημιώθην, καὶ ἡγοῦμαι σκύβαλα, ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω, “What is more, I continue to consider everything a loss compared to¹³³ the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have lost all things. I consider them excrement that I may gain Christ.”

There are three genitives in this phrase - τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου. The first genitive, τῆς γνώσεως, “of the knowledge”, is a genitive of apposition, which means that τὸ ὑπερέχον, “the one supreme value,” and τῆς γνώσεως, “of the knowledge”, have the same referent. The second genitive, Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, “of Christ Jesus”, could either be a subjective or an objective

¹³³ The preposition διὰ can be translated “because of” or “for” (Hawthorne 2004:190). I prefer a translation of “compared to”, since I am of the opinion that such a translation incorporates both possibilities presented by Hawthorne.

genitive. In the case of a subjective genitive, the “one supreme value” is “to be known by Christ Jesus” (as in 1 Cor 13:12). The objective genitive means that Christ Jesus is not the one who knows but the one who is known, namely, “knowledge of Christ Jesus”. Christ Jesus is, therefore, the ultimate object of Paul’s quest (the latter interpretation of the genitive best fits the context; perhaps Paul intends to include both ideas, however - to know Christ as well as to be known by Christ [see Gal 4:9]). The third genitive, τοῦ κυρίου μου, “of my Lord”, is appositive to Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, “of Christ Jesus”, and not in any sense predicate. Paul has in mind the personal knowledge or intimate acquaintance of Christ as “my” Lord (Hawthorne 2004:190)¹³⁴.

The γνῶσις, “knowledge”, Paul refers to in this verse has its roots in the Old Testament. In this section I will refer also to the oral-scribal intertexture of Phil 3:8, which provides a valuable platform from which to consider ideological texture. There are many options as to the precise context from which Paul’s usage of the term comes: perhaps Hellenistic mysticism, Gnosticism, Judaism, an amalgam of Hellenic and Hebraic ideas? Hawthorne (2004:191), Louw & Nida (1995:100-101), O’Brien (1991:387-388), Fee (1995:Kindle locations 9229-9231) and Fowl (2005:Kindle locations 2127-2129), however, all point to the context as that of the “knowledge of Yahweh”, namely, da‘at YHWH.

The atmosphere of knowledge in the Old Testament focuses on relationship, namely, knowing and being known. The “knowledge of God”, in Old Testament usage, is more experiential than it is intellectual. The relationship between God and people is the central focus here. ידע means “to know,” or “to learn to know,” by personal dealings or through good or bad experience (Bultmann 1964c:697)¹³⁵.

¹³⁴ “The verb occurs in v. 10; both words indicate, not the mere relation of the object to the subject as in intellectual knowing, but of the subject to the blessed object as in heart knowledge” (Lenski 1961:836-837).

¹³⁵ Phil 3:8 ff. also contains Gnostic expressions; Paul undoubtedly borrows from the Gnostics in describing the γνῶσις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ as a distinctive mark of a follower of Jesus. That all this is very different from Gnosticism is finally illustrated by the fact that Paul is not describing individual experiences but the character of Christian existence in general (Bultmann 1964c:710-711)

The Old Testament usage of knowledge, therefore, has an “element of acknowledgement”, but also an “element of movement of will”. It is primarily used “for acknowledgement of the acts of God”. יָדָע is used for acknowledgment of the acts of God (Deut 11:2; Is 41:20; Hos 11:3; Mi 6:5). And it bears the same sense when used of the recognition that Yahweh is God (Deut 4:39; 8:5; 29:5; Is 43:10; Ps 46:10). To know Him or His name is to confess or acknowledge Him, to give Him honor and to obey His will (1 Sam 2:12; Is 1:3; Jer 2:8; 9:2–5; Ps 9:10; 36:10; 87:4; Job 18:21; Dan 11:32). The “knowledge of God” (Hos 4:1; 6:6; Is 11:2, 9), or “knowledge” in the absolute (Hos 4:6; Prov 1:7; 9:10), is almost identical with the fear of God with which it is linked in Is. 11:2, and it implies the doing of what is right and just (Jer 22:16). Finally, the element of will in יָדָע emerges with particular emphasis when it is used of God, whose knowing establishes the significance of what is known. In this connection יָדָע can mean “to elect,” namely, to make an object of concern and acknowledgment (Bultmann 1964c:698)¹³⁶.

Scott (2006:277-278) says the knowledge in Phil 3:8 is “intimate knowledge of personal familiarity and devotion”. Scott (2006:278) argues that the apostle’s theological knowledge is structured as a narrative from which his ethical knowledge arises. This theological knowledge with its accompanying ethical knowledge has as its ultimate aim the intimate devotion to God and Christ which leads to salvation (2006:278).

$\Gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ in Paul’s usage here in Phil 3:8, can, therefore, be presented as acknowledgement of the acts of God which results in a movement of the will which honours and obeys this God. It has the same semantic range as the phrase “the fear of God.” “Knowing” as well as “being known” covers the most basic semantic range of the term. A relationship between the divine and the human lies at the heart of this “knowing”¹³⁷. Knowing Christ Jesus (3:8) identifies Paul as a friend of Christ, for it

¹³⁶ “That Paul twice uses the terminology of ‘knowing’ to describe the believer’s relationship with Christ (verse 8, 10) and that he is careful to define what he means by this (verse 10) suggest that he may well be responding to a use by opponents which comes originally from such a Hellenistic milieu, and that, as in 2 Corinthians, the Judaizers, as they boast of a knowledge which avoids the real significance of the death and resurrection of Christ, have adapted their views to suit those they are attempting to influence” (Lincoln 1981:92).

¹³⁷ Fowl makes the connection between Paul’s use of this phrase in 3:8 and his use of *kurios* in 2:6-11: “Further, Paul’s identification of Christ Jesus as ‘my Lord’ may well play on the granting of the name to the exalted Christ in 2:11.

implies the intimacy that was characteristic of ancient friendship. The nature of the relationship between the divine and the human is thus defined in terms of friendship. His claim to have suffered the loss of all things (3:8), including his freedom (1:3), for the sake of Christ has a similar implication since this kind of selflessness was a characteristic of true friendship (Wanamaker 2003:1399).

In Phil 3:9 Paul says: καὶ εὐρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ, μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει, “and to be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through the faithfulness of Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faithfulness.” In this iconic biblical statement, we find, I believe, a summary of Paul’s theological ideology¹³⁸.

Paul’s teaching on “justification” is already introduced in Phil 1:11. The main teaching on justification is elaborated in 3:7–11, with its theme “righteousness by faithfulness”. The main lineaments are displayed both negatively, by renouncing “confidence in the flesh” (3:3) and abandoning a striving for “righteousness based on law” (3:9), and positively, by embracing confidence in Christ (3:3) and receiving the righteousness from (ἐκ) God and through (διὰ) faithfulness, with “faithfulness” (whether personal or Christ’s faithfulness) as the ground (ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει). The complement is sanctification, a calling to be holy. This note is sounded in 1:1, as the Philippians are called “saints in Christ Jesus,” meaning “holy people.” The life of “saints” is epitomized as “fellowship with Christ” (3:10). The experience of sanctification is progressive since Paul confesses that he is “in pursuit” (διώκειν) of the goal and has not yet reached it. There is an eschatological dimension to that attainment (3:11, 20, 21), and the call to realize one’s own “sanctification,” means that the life of Jesus-followers is ethically regulated by God’s righteousness, where “righteousness” is not a substitute for godliness or spirituality but a means to it (3:19; 1:11) (Hawthorne 2004:lxviii).

Indeed, Paul is narrating himself into the story of salvation that begins, climaxes, and will end with Christ, particularly as related in 2:6-11” (2005:Kindle locations 2129-2131; see also O’Brien 1991:388-389).

¹³⁸ Paul says much the same thing in many other passages, i.e., Gal 2:16; 3:10-13; Rom 1:17; 3:19-22; 4:5-6, 13-15; 9:30-32; 10:1-6, 10.

Paul continues in Phil 3:9 when he says, καὶ εὐρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ, “and to be found in Him”, This phrase forms a chiastic relationship with ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω, “that I may gain Christ”, in 3:8 (O’Brien 1991:392). In 3:9 Paul’s thought moves on to the future day of judgement with the longing he has “to be found in him” (Martin 1987:155-156). This opening phrase καὶ εὐρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ (3:9) - as a part of the longer sentence in 3:8-11 - helps us to understand precisely what it is that Paul lives for, namely, he desires to know Christ fully (3:8), to gain him completely (3:8), and to be found in him perfectly (3:9), final goals that are before him day by day (O’Brien 1991:391–392). The use of an aorist passive subjunctive, εὐρεθῶ, makes it quite clear that Paul is not the one doing the finding - it is being done to him. This form of the verb once again also points forward toward the “day of Christ”, namely, that occasion when every knee shall bow to Jesus Christ as Lord (O’Brien 1991:392)¹³⁹.

Ἐν αὐτῷ, “in Him”, can be understood in the same manner as ἐν κυρίῳ, “in the Lord”, in Phil 3:1. Ἐν κυρίῳ most probably refers to the resurrected Jesus being the object, sphere, and source of the Philippian Jesus-followers’ joy. This joy is appropriated through faithfulness in the grace of God in Christ (3:9).

Paul continues in Phil 3:9 when he says, μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει, “not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through the faithfulness of Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faithfulness”. In the rest of this section, I will also consider the intertexture of Phil 3:9 - with a specific focus on the cultural, as well as the oral-scribal texture.

The question “what is wrong with the law?” creates a contrast between human effort and divine grace. Paul, much rather, wants to create an opposition between two human attitudes, two kinds of human perception, one of which is characterized by ignorance that in Christ the messianic age has dawned, and another which consists in the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord (Koperski

¹³⁹

See Bruce (1989:114-115).

1995:168). Paul's concern is with a fundamental misperception of the telos of the law (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2146-2148)¹⁴⁰. The basic question in understanding Phil 3:9 should, therefore, rather be: "what is wrong with Paul's former perception of the law?" (Koperski 1995:168).

Marguerat (2013a:202) points to the role of the prepositions διὰ-ἐκ-ἐπὶ in describing the nature of Paul's pre-Christ righteousness: it is a righteousness which comes (ἐκ) from the law and is opposed to the righteousness conveyed by the mediation (διὰ) of faithfulness, a righteousness coming (ἐκ) from God and based (ἐπὶ) on faithfulness.

In the second part of Phil 3:9 Paul contrasts two types of righteousness, namely, "righteousness from the law" and "righteousness that comes from God, through the faithfulness of Christ". Morna Hooker (2006:40-41) highlights the two main differences between Paul's understanding of righteousness and that of his predecessors. The first difference is that Paul believed that the righteousness of God functions apart from the law. The dying and rising of Jesus lead Paul to believe that He is Lord. The resurrection was, of course, God saying that Jesus is Lord, namely, that He is righteous (see Rom 1). The second difference is that, whereas, for instance, the Qumran writer believed justification to be a future event, Paul says in no uncertain terms that this righteousness is already now a reality for the believer; eschatology has been realized, in Christ (2006:41)¹⁴¹.

"Justification" is the declaration of God, the just judge, that someone is in the right, that their sins are forgiven, and that they are a true member of the covenant family, the people belonging to Abraham. That is how the word works in Paul's writings. It does not describe how people get in to

¹⁴⁰ For an overview on the use of "the righteousness of God" in Paul, see Irons (2015:272-336).

¹⁴¹ Paula Fredriksen (2020:30-33) insightfully argues against a description of Paul's turn from "adversary to apostle" as a "conversion". A conversion would imply a turning away from Judaism and a turning to "a new and different religion outside of and opposed to it" (2020:32). She mentions, in this regard, Schweitzer, Munck and Stendahl who refers to the gospel as an "apocalyptic form of Judaism" (2020:32). According to Fredriksen (2020:32), Munck and Stendahl argued further that Paul's own language indicated that he thought of his apostleship more in terms of a "call" or a "commission" like that of Jeremiah (1:4) and Isaiah (49:1-6). When pagans joined this Jesus-movement, it entailed a radical adjustment for them, however. They had to change gods; they had to stop sacrificing to their idols, and they also had to stop partaking in urban cults. They had to assume "new behaviours" (2020:32). When Jews joined the Jesus-movement, it entailed a different adjustment. When the Jews joined the Jesus-movement, it involved "something more like a shift in perspective, and the adoption of a foreshortened timeframe, since what they expected to happen at the End-Time was said to already be happening among them" (2020:32).

God's forgiven family; it declares that they are in (Wright 2013b:218). Δικαίω is a declarative word, declaring that something is the case, rather than a word for making something happen or changing the way something is (2013:286). This vindication, occurs twice. It occurs in the future on the basis of the entire life a person has led in the power of the Spirit. And it occurs in the present as an anticipation of that future verdict, when someone, responding in believing obedience to the "call" of the gospel, believes that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead (2013:287).

The concept of "faithfulness" comes into sharp focus when Paul says in Phil 3:9: ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει, "but that which is through the faithfulness of Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faithfulness".

In the Old Testament, faith is always a person's reaction to God's primary action. A consideration of faith in the Old Testament cannot overlook the fact that two basically different and even contradictory groups of meaning are used for a person's relation to God, namely, fear on the one side and trust on the other. In the contradictory nature of the usage is expressed the living tension and polar dynamic of the Old Testament relationship to God. Fear and trust are used more or less equally for the relationship to God (about 150 times each) (Weiser 1964:182-183). The LXX and the New Testament were right when they related their term for faith (πιστεύειν) to the Old Testament stem יָמַס, for in this word, that means "trust", is expressed the most distinctive and profound thing which the Old Testament has to say about faith (1964:196).

"In primitive Christianity πίστις became the leading term for the relation of man to God" (Bultmann 1964b:205). To believe, to obey, to trust, to hope, to be faithful - these all form part of the meaning of πίστις (1964b:205-208). Specifically, Christian usage of πίστις includes the acceptance of the kerygma, the content of faith, a personal relation to Christ, believing, and πίστις as *fides quae creditor* (1964b:208-213)¹⁴². Πίστις, "faith", is a central theological concept that represents the

¹⁴² The Latin phrases *fides qua creditor* and *fides quae creditor* "express the subjective and objective character of the one experience of faith" (Plovanich 2007:457). *Fides qua creditor* is "the act of believing or believing faith, the subjective experience of faith or the personal disposition toward the encounter with God" (Plovanich 2007:457). This

correct relationship to God and ultimately the essence of the Christian religion itself. Πίστις is trust which one puts into practice (Barth 1990:92-93).

In the Old Testament the righteous (in faithfulness and obedience) believe in God on the basis of His acts. They do not need to believe the acts themselves, since these are plain to see in the history of the people. In the New Testament, however, it is precisely God's act which has to be believed; it is trust in the miraculous power of God which can raise up life from death and which, as it has raised up Christ, can also raise up us. Christ is God's final act which also embraces the future (Bultmann 1964b:215-216). In contrast to the usage of "faith" in Judaism, Paul "connects the blessing of salvation strictly, consistently and exclusively to πίστις. Like Judaism, he describes this blessing as δικαιοσύνη" (1964b:219).

The concept of "faithfulness" is, therefore, central to an understanding of Paul's theology. Πίστις implies an acceptance of God's χάρις, "grace", in Christ, which in turn gives the believer the status of δικαιοσύνη, "righteousness". Δικαιοσύνη can only be received "through faithfulness in Christ." Faith always comes from the word itself (Rom 10:14) and is πίστις ἐξ ἀκοῆς (v. 17), so that Paul can speak of the ῥῆμα τῆς πίστεως (v. 8) or the ἀκοὴ πίστεως (Gal 3:2, 5). Though faithfulness does, indeed, find its basis in proclamation of God's salvation activity, Paul thinks through the consequences of this event in a much more radical fashion: πίστις belongs together with χάρις (Rom 4:4f., 16) and for the same reason is antithetical to ἔργα νόμου (Rom 3:28; 9:32; Gal 2:16) and to the νόμος understood as the principle of performance (Rom 3:21f.; Gal 3:12; Phil 3:9). The salvation gift of δικαιοσύνη can only be received ἐκ πίστεως (Rom 1:17; 5:1; 9:30; 10:6; 14:23; Gal 3:7ff., 22, 24; 5:5) or διὰ πίστεως (Rom 3:25, 31; Gal 2:16; 3:14, 26; Phil 3:9; ἐκ πίστεως and διὰ πίστεως are equivalents in Rom 3:30; Rom 5:2 uses dat. τῇ πίστει)¹⁴³. Paul can speak of the δικαιοσύνη πίστεως

personal faith also has an objective dimension. Thus, *fides quae creditor* "means the content of faith or the faith that is believed, the objective expression of faith" (Plovanich 2007:457).

¹⁴³ For a detailed discussion on χάρις and gift-language, see two recent Eerdmans publications by J.M.G. Barclay, namely, *Paul and the Gift* (2015), as well as *Paul and the Power of Grace* (2020).

(Rom 4:13), which as δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ (10:3) or ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνη (Phil 3:9) is the complete antithesis of δικαιοσύνη ἐκ νόμου (3:9) or ἰδία δικαιοσύνη (Rom 10:3) (Barth 1990:95)¹⁴⁴.

Jeremy Punt, in turn, highlights the *fides qua creditor* dimension of faithfulness from the perspective of the classical Greek usage of the term πίστις. Punt (2017:1-2) emphasizes the “proper setting for Paul’s emphasis on πίστις” as the “commonwealth” or “citizenship”¹⁴⁵. According to Punt (2017:2) “citizenship gave content and meaning also to Pauline appeals to πίστις.” Even though the claim of Acts¹⁴⁶ that Paul had Roman citizenship, “does not sit well with the autobiographical sections in his letters where it is never mentioned” (2017:2), Paul does mention citizenship explicitly, however, in Phil 3:20. Whereas a modern translation of πίστις as “believe/belief” carries the primary meaning of “conviction”, with a secondary meaning of “trust/confidence”, modern meanings attributed to “believe/belief” does not include the notions of “loyalty and fidelity” (2017:4). For Paul the opposite of this was true: “πίστις and πιστεύω was primarily about loyalty and fidelity” (2017:4). In classical Greek usage πίστις did not refer to a basic relationship with God (2017:4). The primary context for faithfulness was Empire and the military (2017:5). In light of this Punt (2017:5) says:

“Paul’s πίστις fitted into his notion of the alternative citizenship of Jesus followers - neither of which stood aloof from what today will be called responsible citizenship. He, of course, had to work out the parameters of faithful citizenship, an important element of which was his discursive and ideological opposition to the version fostered by imperial discourse.”

¹⁴⁴ Bultmann notes the different uses of πίστις: 1) In classical usage, “Along the lines of the use of πιστός, πίστις means a. (abstr.) ‘confidence,’ ‘trust,’ with a ref. in this sense to persons, relations (Thuc., I, 120, 5) and also things” (1964:176) 2) In Hellenistic usage, “The use of πίστις as a religious term is also promoted by the fact that πίστις became a catchword in those religions which engaged in propaganda. This did not apply to Christianity alone. All missionary preaching demanded faith in the deity proclaimed by it” (1964:181) 3) In Stoic usage, “In Stoicism, then, πίστις has no religious significance in the sense of denoting man’s relation to deity or of having deity and its sway as objects. The attitude of πίστις is, however, a religious attitude to the degree that in it man, as πιστός, ἐλεύθερος, and αἰδήμων, actualises his relationship to God” (1964a:182)

In contrast to Gnosticism, Paul focuses on faith as orientation to the future; πίστις does not allow human beings to escape from the concrete situation of this life (1964:220-221).

¹⁴⁵ Morgan (2015:1) indicates the semantic range of *pistis* and *fides* in the Early Roman Empire as including “‘trust’, ‘trustworthiness’, ‘faithfulness’, ‘good faith’, ‘credit’, ‘guarantee’, a legal trust, philosophical proof, and religious belief.”

¹⁴⁶ See Acts 16:37; 21:39; 22:25,28; 25:11.

Given Philippians' "politically provocative" tone, Paul addresses the "community's internal life and its citizenship formatted through Christ" (Punt 2017:6). Faithful citizenship is advanced in Paul's letters. In practice this means that the followers of Jesus immersed themselves in the religious, political and cultural dimensions "of the contemporary world as loyal followers of Jesus" (2017:7).

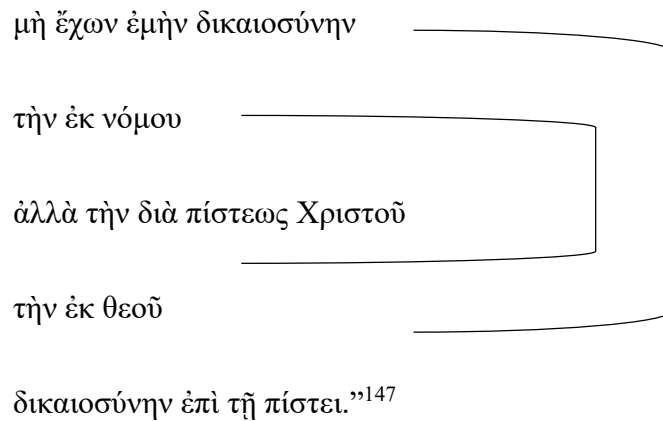
Given the context provided from an overview into the usage of the term πίστις in the Old Testament, in Classical Greek, as well as in the New Testament, πίστις can be translated with a semantic range which stretches from loyalty and fidelity, on the one side of the spectrum, to trust, on the other side of the spectrum.

The phrase, τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, can take "Christ" as a subjective genitive - Christ's obedient fidelity to the will of the Father. Others argue that the genitive is objective and that the phrase refers to the Jesus-follower's response of faithfulness in Christ. The scholarly debate is quite contentious. Each interpretation is grammatically possible and can make sense of the relevant passages (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2148-2154).

It is not clear what Paul means by his use of the term πίστις in Phil 3:9. Does Paul refer to faith in Christ, the faithfulness of Christ, both, or "something more thoroughly and systematically multivalent ..." (Morgan 2015:303). According to Morgan (2015:303), it should not be surprising - given the example of Christ in the Christ-hymn in 2:5-11 - if the Philippian Jesus-followers understood πίστεως Χριστοῦ subjectively, namely, as "the faithfulness of Christ."

Paul's second use of πίστις in Phil 3:9 (in the phrase ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει) is even more puzzling. This phrase could refer to the faithfulness of Christ/the trustworthiness of Christ, but it can also refer to the trust of the believer in Christ (Morgan 2015:303). For Morgan (2015:303-304) the similarity in language between 3:9-10 and Gal 2 and Rom 3, validates a translation of πίστις as "Christ's faithfulness both towards God ... and towards human beings, which invokes human trust in both God and Christ."

O'Brien (1991:394) also argues for a translation based on an interpretation of τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ as a subjective genitive. The long participial construction contrasts two kinds of righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) in a sharp antithesis and it may be structured in the form of a chiasm (O'Brien 1991:394):



Viewed from the perspective of this structure, τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ can be translated as “through the faithfulness of Christ”¹⁴⁸.

Paul’s logical argumentation in Phil 3:9 can be presented in the following manner: And that I can be found in the Messiah, not having my own righteousness, namely, being part of God’s forgiven covenantal family, which is from the law, but that which is through the faithfulness of Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faithfulness, namely, loyalty, fidelity and trust.

2.3. A restored humanity

In Phil 3:8-9 the status of Jesus-followers was presented as righteous because of their loyalty, fidelity, and trust in the faithfulness of Jesus. In 3:10-11 Paul also presents us with the characteristics, namely, the desires and the telos of the lives of God’s restored humanity. Michael Gorman provides

¹⁴⁷ O'Brien (1991:398-400) defends his translation of “faithfulness of Christ”. It is because of this faithfulness of Christ that the righteousness which is from God can be received through faith; see also Bockmuehl (1998:211-212). Barth (1990:93) argues for an objective genitive by referring to Gal 2:16. See also Hawthorne (2004:195), Louw & Nida (1995:103), Moule (1975:165), Lenski (1961:839-840), Bruce (1989:115) for a translation of “faith in Christ.”

¹⁴⁸ See Wright (2009:Kindle locations 2473-2478). In contrast to this conclusion notice Fee (1995:Kindle locations 9321-9343); see also Reumann (2008:494-498).

a rich and thick description of the characteristics of this restored humanity:

“God is creating a forgiven, liberated, and reconciled people who are being renewed together in the image of God, found in the crucified and resurrected Messiah Jesus, so that they, by the power of the indwelling Spirit, will lead lives of faithfulness, hope, and love as the body of the Messiah in the world - the people of the new covenant and new creation inaugurated by Christ’s coming, death, and resurrection, all in anticipation of the restoration of the entire cosmos” (2020:188).

God restored humanity through the Christ-event, that is, “the power and wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:24; see also 1 Cor 1:18 & Rom 1:16). “The Gospel, then, is power. It *affects* people. It *effects* transformation. It engenders life” (Gorman 2020:191) (emphasis in original). Our analysis of πίστις indicated that, for Paul, the word is primarily about loyalty and fidelity. God’s restoration of humanity, therefore, benefits humanity not only when they believe this good news, but also when they participate in it (2020:195). “Paul does not say that the gospel entails merely *believing in* the saving justice of God but *being transformed into* that justice, embodying it corporately and individually” (2020:201) (emphasis in original). According to Gorman (2020:200) the reconciling initiative of God in Christ¹⁴⁹ inaugurates and sustains transformation on three levels. First, it performs existential transformation that alters a person’s identity and orientation to life in a radical manner. Second, it enables an epistemological transformation which completely rearranges a person’s “intellectual furniture” (2020:200) This means that we regard no one from a human point of view. Third, it enables an ethical transformation which immerses a person in a new moral world.

Transformation into the saving justice of God is described by Paul in Phil 3:10-11 as participation in the Messiah’s suffering, death and resurrection. The life of a Jesus-followers could be characterised by these three categories: suffering, death, and resurrection. This description, furthermore, explains what is meant by knowing Christ (3:8, 10) and gaining Christ (3:8). For Paul, knowledge of Christ and gaining Christ, means to suffer, to die and to be resurrected again. From this

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See 2 Cor 5:17.

longing Paul expresses his desire to participate in the suffering, death and resurrection of the Messiah (and to, ultimately, be resurrected himself), it can be understood that the grace of the Christ-event is unconditioned, but not unconditional (Gorman 2020:206).

In the rest of this section I will now discuss certain important literary and rhetorical aspects pertaining to Paul's description in Phil 3:10-11. Again, the aim of this exercise is to deepen our understanding of Paul's argument in 3:1-11.

In Phil 3:10 Paul says, τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ καὶ [τὴν] κοινωνίαν [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ, συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ, "in order that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in his suffering; being conformed to his death". Τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτὸν, "to know him", can be translated in a variety of ways. It could express purpose, "in order that I may know him", parallel to "that I may gain Christ" in 3:8; or it may point to the result "so that I may know him"; or there may be an extension of the ideas previously expressed (the explanatory use of the infinitive, τοῦ γινῶναι) with the meaning that God's righteousness received by faithfulness makes it possible for the believer to know Christ and his saving benefits (Martin 1987:156). The relationship of the phrase, τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτὸν, "to know him", to 3:8-9 is complicated. This statement, as part of the long sentence from 3:8-11, begins with a genitive articular infinitive, τοῦ γινῶναι. This construction probably designates purpose and parallels the ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω and [ἵνα] εὕρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ of 3:8&9. This is preferable to joining τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτόν with τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει (or as a variation on this to the whole clause μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην ... πίστει), and regarding the apostle as stating that the goal of his receiving the righteousness from God is that "I may come to know him"¹⁵⁰ (O'Brien 1991:400-401). τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτὸν can, therefore, be translated as expressing purpose: "in order that I may know him."

Γινῶσις, in Paul's usage of the term in Phil 3:8, is acknowledgement of the acts of God which results in a movement of the will which honours and obeys this God. It has the same semantic range

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This interpretation goes against that of Fee (1995:Kindle locations 9360-9363).

as the phrase “the fear of God.” “Knowing” as well as “being known” covers the most basic semantic range of the term. A relationship between the divine and the human lies at the heart of this “knowing”. This “knowing” should be taken to mean the same thing in 3:10.

Paul continues in Phil 3:10: καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ καὶ [τὴν] κοινωνίαν [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ, συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ, “and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in his suffering; being conformed to his death”.

Καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ and καὶ [τὴν] κοινωνίαν [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ should be taken together, since the power of the resurrection is that which makes it possible to share in Christ’s sufferings and the resurrection provides the proper framework within which one can make sense of one’s present sufferings (O’Brien 1991:404)¹⁵¹. Without the power of Christ’s resurrection, present suffering (even for Christ’s sake) is meaningless (Fee 1995:Kindle locations 9405).

The following section will also focus on the intertexture texture of Phil 3:10. Specific attention will be given to oral-scribal, as well as historic intertexture, considering how these feed into ideological texture.

Grundmann (1964:290-291) notes the striking difference between the Greek and Hellenistic usage of the concept of δύναμις with that of the Old Testament. The big difference can be found in the very personal character which δύναμις takes on in the Old Testament. In the place of a neutral idea of God, we have the personal God. This difference is plainly expressed in the concept of power. When contrasted with the surrounding deities, which are essentially nature gods, the God of the Old Testament is the God of history (1964:291). Where the deity is identified with impersonal power, a factor which distorts religion as a living personal relationship to God is introduced into religious life. The personal God of the Old Testament, in contrast, makes the relationship between God and a person possible.

¹⁵¹ See also Fee (1995:Kindle locations 9417-9428) and Fowl (2005:Kindle locations 2158-2163).

Δύναμις can be found 119 times in the New Testament, of which 36 occurrences are in Paul's letters. The meaning of δύναμις includes the power of God, the power of Jesus Christ the Lord, and Paul often times connects δύναμις and λόγος; so also "Spirit" and "power" (Friedrich 1990:356-358). In the New Testament the concept of "power" is directly linked with the fact of Christ. In this regard there is an undeniable link with the Old Testament concept of the Messiah (Grundmann 1964:299-305). Jesus possessed the power of God and this is particularly demonstrated in the hour and event of His death. The resurrection leads Jesus Himself back to the power of God (1964:304).

Τῆς ἀναστάσεως, "resurrection", is used in reference to raising someone from the dead, the eschatological resurrection and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (Kremer 1990b:88-92). The power of Jesus' resurrection is the life-giving power of God, the power which he manifested in raising Christ from the dead, and which he now manifests in the new life which the Christian receives from the risen Christ and shares with him (O'Brien 1991:404-405). The Christ event helps us to better understand the different usages of the concept of power in the New Testament. The source of Christ's power is undoubtedly the power of God. This power also births and sustains the community of Jesus-followers (Grundmann 1964:305-317). In the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, God, therefore, displays His reign over all other sources of power, namely, suprahuman powers, cultural power, and human sinfulness. God's raising of Jesus from the dead, restores all relational dysfunction caused by these opposing powers. God's power - displayed in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead - restores humanity. For Paul, the way of Jesus, as presented in the description of the humility and the faithfulness of Jesus in Phil 2:6-11, indicates a reversal of any other forms of power: "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Cor 1:18, NIV). True power is found in service, not in competing for higher status and honour.

The phrase καὶ [τὴν] κοινωνίαν [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ, "and the fellowship of sharing in his suffering", should be taken closely with the preceding "knowing the power of his resurrection", because of the "and" as well as the sharing of the same definite article with "fellowship" (Hawthorne

2004:197). Κοινωνία is best understood in an active sense of “participation”, while the genitive παθημάτων is objective, denoting that in which one participates, that is, “share in his sufferings”. This translation fits the context well and is consistent with Pauline usage¹⁵² (O’Brien 1991:405).

In the Old Testament, neither **חֶבֶר** nor the κοινων-lemma is used for the relation to God, as is so often the case in the Greek world. This expresses the sense of distance which the righteous Israelite feels from God, as distinct from the Greek. The righteous Israelite never regards themselves as the **חֶבֶר** of God. Similarly, in the LXX, even though this is influenced by Greek usage and thinking, we never find κοινωνία for the relation between God and human beings. This is a surprising fact (Hauck 1964:801).

In the New Testament the κοινων-lemma word group refers to sharing with someone in something. Paul specifically uses it for the religious participation of the believer in Christ and Christian blessings, as well as for the mutual fellowship of Jesus-followers; to give someone a share in something; fellowship in the absolute (Hauck 1964:804-809).

In secular Greek κοινωνία is used to indicate a “close life partnership” like marriage (Hauck 1964:798). According to Hainz (1990:303) κοινωνία has a very specific usage in Paul which is different from the use of the term in general Greek usage. Paul also uses the term κοινωνία on two other occasions in Philippians, First, in Phil 1:5 (NIV) Paul says: ἐπὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡμέρας ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν, “because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.” Second, in 2:1 (NIV) Paul says: Εἴ τις οὖν παράκλησις ἐν Χριστῷ, εἴ τι παραμύθιον ἀγάπης, εἴ τις κοινωνία πνεύματος, εἴ τις σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτιρμοί, “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion.” Philippians, has the greatest frequency of the κοινων-lemma cluster within Paul’s letters (Lincoln 2009:143). Since a translation of κοινωνία with the English rendering “fellowship” might lead to some misconceptions not intended by Paul in his own

¹⁵² See 1 Cor. 1:9; possibly 10:16 (twice); 2 Cor. 13:13; Phil. 1:5; 2:1; Phm. 6 (O’Brien 1991:405).

usage of the word, it is of great importance to make a very careful consideration of Paul's usage of the term in his writings. For Paul there is a reciprocity within certain relationships, namely, the churches and the mother church in Jerusalem, as well as between the apostle Paul and the churches (1990:303-304). *Koinōnía* means "participation," or "fellowship," especially with a close bond. It expresses a two-sided relation and the emphasis in this relationship may be on either the giving or the receiving. It can mean "participation," "impartation," or "fellowship" (Hauck 1964:798). Paul also uses *koinōnía* when he refers to the collection for the church in Jerusalem (Hainz 1990:303-304).

Paul's usage of *koinōnía* takes on its greatest significance in connection with statements about Christ and the Spirit. Christ offers His followers participation in his body, blood and sufferings. The partnership of the Spirit binds all Jesus-followers (Hainz 1990:304-305). *Koinōnía* is not only used in reference to the financial relationship which existed between Paul and the Philippian community. It refers to every and any aspect of this relationship whether in sympathy or in suffering or in active labor or in any other way¹⁵³. Fellowship denotes a partnership of common interest, forged and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Bockmuehl 1997:106).

Paul had a very good relationship with the Jesus-followers in Philippi, precisely because of their *koinōnía* with him in the gospel. This term refers not only to "fellowship" but also to "a sharing in common life that resulted directly in mutual support; and also, it meant that Paul and his supporters belonged to one another with a family identity. What happens to one happens to all" (Wright 2013a:Kindle locations 1663-1664). It is of great importance to realize that Paul, as far as we can gather from his writings, only had a successful financial relationship with the church in Philippi. Whereas Paul could not accept the financial support from the Corinthian Jesus-followers, he had no such problem in accepting the financial gift of the Philippian Jesus-followers (Briones 2013:116).

¹⁵³ In his monumental 2014 work, *Paul's Koinonia with the Philippians*, Julian M. Ogereau sets out to investigate one of Paul's strategies to finance his missionary activities (Ogereau 2014:348). For Ogereau (2014:349) Paul maintained his relationship with this congregation in order to fund his missionary activity: "We concluded that Paul's *koinōnía* with the Philippians is best described as a *societas evangelii*, that is, a partnership for the propagation of the gospel, whereby the Philippians provided the *pecunia* (funds), while Paul supplied the *opera* and *ars* (labour and skill). This *modus operandi*, we posited, enabled him to circumvent the negative effects of patronage, maximise his limited human and financial resource, and ensure the practical involvement of his communities in the work of his mission."

The reason for this is that a full, trusting *κοινωνία* had been previously established (2013:58). Paul reinterprets the nature of this *κοινωνία* relationship as it was understood in a first-century social context. This reinterpreted approach functions as the filter for Paul's approach to finances and his decisions regarding finances: "In short, Paul and the Philippians enjoy a *κοινωνία* of gift and suffering, with God, the divine third party, circulating *χάρις* in this triangulated relationship" (2013:93) (emphasis in original)¹⁵⁴.

Πάθημα can refer to "the passions of sin", as well as "the sufferings" of Jesus-followers which primarily results from persecutions (Kremer 1990a:1-2). Its main sense is "suffering" (Paul in Rom 8:18; 2 Cor 1:5-7; Phil 3:10; Col 1:24; 2 Tim 3:11) (Michaelis 1964:930). The suffering is both physical and mental in nature (O'Brien 1991:405-406)¹⁵⁵. Louw & Nida (1995:106), however, believes that this phrase refers to an inward experience only. Hawthorne (2004:198) agrees that knowing Christ in the fellowship of his sufferings is equally an inward experience that can be described in terms of having died with Christ (see Rom 6:8 and Gal 2:19-20).

Finally, Paul says in Phil 3:10: συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ, "being conformed to his death". Συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ, "being conformed to his death", does not mean that Paul might through martyrdom become like Jesus on the cross. Συμμορφίζεσθαι is a hapax legomena (Hawthorne 2004:198). I fully concur with O'Brien's (1991:407) proposal that συμμορφιζόμενος qualifies all of the preceding words in 3:10, not simply "sharing in the fellowship of his sufferings."

Θάνατος appears 47 times in Paul (Bieder 1990:129-130). In classical Greek usage, death is viewed as an unnatural phenomenon which destroys life. In Hellenistic usage Stoicism views death as a natural phenomenon. Neo-Platonism views death as that which completes what the soul strives

¹⁵⁴ Joubert (2000:217), writing in the context of Paul's collection efforts for the Jerusalem church, emphasises the importance of this perspective of a three-way relationship between individuals, communities and God: "Although Paul placed the collection within the interpretive framework of Graeco-Roman benefit exchange, he also reinterpreted some of its basic tenets in terms of his own understanding of the Christ-event ... Instead of seeking personal honour, he presents himself as going to Jerusalem to seek the welfare of fellow Jesus-followers in Romans 15. At the same time Paul redefines the predisposition of his Christian givers regarding reciprocal relationships. Instead of following the typical Graeco-Roman principle of giving as a return, Paul shifts their emphasis from the expected return gifts to their own positive inner orientation, irrespective of the reaction on the side of the recipients."

¹⁵⁵ See Lenski (1961:842), Moule (1975:165), and Bruce (1989:116).

for. Gnosticism views death as release, and in the New Testament θάνατος means dying or being dead. It is seen as the consequence and punishment of sin. It is unclear as to how far death finds its true character in being able to destroy, or in the fact that it involves future torment; escaping death can only be done through Christ (Bultmann 1964a:14-18)¹⁵⁶.

What exactly was the nature of this conformity to the death of Christ? Is this simply a case of dying the same death (martyr's death), in the same way as Christ did (by crucifixion)? If so, did Paul not fail miserably? Bruce states that Paul's language here includes several options (O'Brien 1991:408–409). O'Brien's (1991:408) analysis of Paul's use of the passive participle (not middle)¹⁵⁷, as well as the present tense of the participle indicates that Paul is being conformed to the death of Christ, rather than a conformity based on his own choices. The present tense of the participle emphasizes the continuity of this process of conformity to Christ's death. During his present sufferings Paul is being renewed daily into the image of his Lord, and this means into conformity with his death. It is an ongoing process that will be completed only on the final day¹⁵⁸.

The story of Christ in Phil 2:6-11 should determine what conformity to Christ's death means. Three interrelated characteristics emerge from 2:6-11. First, it is the result of seeking the benefit of others. Second, it is the result of willed self-emptying. Third, it is the result of obedience to God (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2166-2172). These characteristics can shape an understanding of conformity to Christ's death. While not denying the possibility that the reference can be to physical death, then, the context appears to demand an interpretation which speaks of an inward transformation of one's nature (Louw & Nida 1995:106).

¹⁵⁶ The Old Testament view on "death" is beautifully summed up in Psalm 73: "There is a remarkably plain expression of this certainty that the relationship of grace will persist, that the fellowship initiated by God cannot be destroyed, in Ps. 73: 'I am continually with thee ... thou guidest me according to thy counsel, and afterward receivest me in glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? Though my flesh and my heart fail, God remains my portion forever' (v. 23ff.). One may say that here the OT belief in the hereafter finds its purest formulation. This expectation is neither magical nor mythical nor speculative nor mystical. It is a certainty which is produced in the righteous by the concept of grace alone" (Von Rad 1964:848). This view of death should be kept in balance with the very chilling view of the Old Testament writers with regard to death (1964:846).

¹⁵⁷ Hawthorne believes that Paul is here using the middle participle. This choice does not, however, exclude the possibility of physical sufferings and its transformative effect in the life of a Jesus-follower (Hawthorne 2004:199-200).

¹⁵⁸ See Segal (1990:141) for confirmation on this.

Bieder (1990:131) interprets Paul's usage of the term "death" in Philippians as follows:

"The statements about death in Philippians are characterized by Paul's ability to see both the completeness of the obedience of Christ 'unto *death*' (2:8) and the continuity of the commitment of the ailing Epaphroditus when he was near death (2:27, 30). He thus demonstrates how the one who follows Christ may be 'like Christ in his *death*' (3:10), even if Christ is set apart from him in his '*death* on the cross' (2:8)." (emphasis in original)¹⁵⁹.

Paul's logical argumentation in Phil 3:10 can be presented in the following manner: In order that I may know Him and be known by Him, and the power of God displayed in his resurrection from the dead, and the participation in his physical and mental suffering, to be inwardly transformed in my nature by dying to self like Jesus.

In Phil 3:11 Paul shifts his attention to the future when he says: εἴ πως καταντήσω εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν, "And if, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead." Ἐξανάστασις is found only in 3:11 (Oepke 1964:372). Ἐξανάστασις is the bodily resurrection from the dead that will occur at the parousia, and it lies wholly within the future (O'Brien 1991:411). The addition of the preposition ἐκ before the usual form of the noun ἀνάστασις (which appears in 3:10) reinforces the significance of the preposition ἐκ in ἐκ νεκρῶν, that is, "out from among dead ones". This resurrection is neither a special reward for martyrs, nor a resurrection directly after death, nor a special resurrection before the parousia, but the end-time bodily resurrection of the just that Paul expected to take place at the return of Christ (1 Cor 15:35–49; Rom 8:23; Phil 3:21) (O'Brien's 1991:414–415)¹⁶⁰.

Paul's final thoughts in this section seem quite odd for several reasons. First, the construction εἴ πως seems to imply a degree of contingency and doubt on Paul's part. Paul uses this construction also in Rom 1:10; 11:14. In these verses the phrase conveys a strong hope or ardent desire for

¹⁵⁹ See Fee (1995:Kindle locations 9788–9795).

¹⁶⁰ See Louw & Nida (1995:107), Bruce (1989:119) and Hawthorne (2004:201).

something that will happen, with God bringing it about. In Phil 1:6 and 2:13 Paul makes strong assertions about God's providential working in the lives of the Philippian Jesus-followers. It would be strange for him, therefore, to have significant doubts about God's working in his own situation. If there is any form of contingency involved in what Paul is saying in 3:11, it would be of the sort of point Paul makes that he has not yet arrived at his ultimate end. In this journey he is full both of the ardent desire that comes from the conviction that his end is true and appropriate and of the hope that the God who raised Jesus from the dead will also do so in his case (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2184-2192).

The chiastic structure of Phil 3:10-11 suggests that εἰ πῶς is to be taken with the clause immediately preceding, namely, συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ, “being conformed to his death.” What Paul expresses here is his sense of expectation and hope with humility (Louw & Nida 1995:107). Paul’s use of εἰ πῶς is an expression of expectation (O’Brien 1991:412). According to Lenski (1961:843) the use of εἰ πῶς with the subjunctive (as is the case here in 3:11) is akin to an indirect question expressing expectation. The hope that Paul expresses in 3:11 is no uncertain hope. It is a sure and well-founded hope (Bruce 1989:117). Paul, like other Jesus-followers, lives in the overlap of the ages; he, too, stands between the “already” and the “not yet”, and consummated salvation is not yet his. He passionately longs to reach the final destination and presses on towards that goal (O’Brien 1991:412–413).

Paul’s logical argumentation in Phil 3:11 can be presented in the following manner: I am expecting resurrection out from among the physically dead at the return of Jesus, the anointed King.

I suggest that Paul’s rich and thick description in Phil 3:1-11 not only provides us with an understanding of God’s strategy or means of restoring His world, namely, the Christ-event (which summarizes Paul’s ideological matrix), but also with the implications and modus of this event, namely, participating in the Messiah’s suffering, death and resurrection, in the practical life of an

individual within the community of Jesus-followers¹⁶¹. Paul's ideological premise is the Christ-event. In 3:1-11 Paul's focus is the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus. This is a form of power characterized by humility and faithfulness and which finds expression in service - not in competing for higher honours or status. It is this power of God which raised Jesus from the dead, and it is this same power of God at work in the Jesus-followers in Philippi. This power births the Philippian community of Jesus-followers, and this power sustains the community. This power transforms the community of Jesus-followers in Philippi into a community characterized by their desire to humbly and faithfully serve God and others. In this way the community of Jesus-followers can also look forward to being raised from the dead like Jesus himself. I am of the opinion, therefore, that Paul's rich and thick description in 3:1-11 provides us with much insight into our search for rootedness and direction in Christian spirituality (I will expand on these possibilities and insights in more detail in chapter three).

Finally, we move to an analysis of the sacred texture of Phil 3:1-11. In the search of sacred aspects in the texts, the reader is interested in finding insights into the nature of the relation between human life and the divine (Robbins 1996a:120). Given the rich description of the relation between the divine and the human found in 3:1-11, a study of the sacred texture found in this text can be expected to provide some valuable insights into the nature of Christian spirituality.

3. Sacred texture

Robbins (1996a:120-132) differentiates between eight categories when analysing the sacred texture of a text, namely, deity, holy person, spirit being, divine history, human redemption, human

¹⁶¹ Michael Gorman refers to the "means" as the "objective act of God", whilst he refers to the "modus" as "the subjective human response to that act" (2020:194).

Since the Philippian congregation is characterized by a "double location" (Eastman 2020:211) - they are "in Christ" and they are "in Philippi" (Phil 1:1) - their way of life, which is shaped by belonging to Christ, must be lived out in their specific social location (2020:211).

commitment, religious community, and ethics. All of these categories feature in Phil 3:1-11¹⁶². This is a remarkable feature of 3:1-11, namely, the deep and thick nature of the sacred texture of this text¹⁶³. This is another reason for its appropriateness to the consideration of spirituality.

Paul's depiction of the deity in Phil 3:1-11 focuses on the reality and nature of the deity and the response of human beings in relation to the deity. Diagram 10 provides a summary of Paul's depiction of the deity. Paul's ideological starting point is that the deity has acted, acts and continues to act, whilst Paul also focuses on the response of the individual to the deity's actions. The deity is the catalyst, namely, the reason for an individual's action or response. The deity "moves" the individual. The individual merely responds to this initiative, but the deity is also the object of the individual's response. The character of the relationship between the deity and the individual can be seen from Paul's frequent use of prepositions or conjunctions in the context of the deity. These instances either refers to the deity as the reason for or dynamic source of a specific response from the individual (3:3, 7, 8), or they refer to the deity as the object of the individual's response (3:1, 3): χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ, "rejoice in the Lord (3:1); οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες, "we who worship by the Spirit of God" (3:3)¹⁶⁴; καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, "who glory in Christ Jesus" (3:3); ταῦτα ἡγνῆμαι διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν ζημίαν, "I now consider loss because of Christ" (3:7); ἡγοῦμαι πάντα ζημίαν εἶναι διὰ τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου, "I continue to consider everything

¹⁶² Phil 3:3 raises a question: did Paul reject monotheism? (Novenson 2020:248). Since Paul refers to "the Spirit of God" and "Christ Jesus" as the objects of "worship" and "glory", does this imply that Paul rejects a fundamental confession of Jewish piety, namely, the Shema in Deut 6:4 which expressly refers to the oneness of God? In Rom 3:30 and Gal 3:19-20 Paul pointedly affirms the oneness of God. Even though Paul affirms the oneness of God, he "also acknowledged the existence and agency of many other divine beings" (2020:256). Paul, as an ancient Jew, differed from ancient gentiles "in regarding the deity resident in Jerusalem as the creator of all things, and in theoretically reserving cultic worship for him alone" (2020:256).

¹⁶³ Chapter three of this study will focus on spirituality. The categories and guidelines presented under sacred texture in this chapter will provide guidelines for the investigation that is to follow in chapter three. An in-depth investigation of the guidelines presented here, therefore, will only surface in chapter three.

¹⁶⁴ Louw & Nida (1995:93) sums up the meaning of this phrase as follows: "The Holy Spirit is the dynamic source of Christian life, and he alone can inspire us to worship God. In many languages it is obligatory to identify the object of worship; thus we can restructure this statement into *we worship God by means of his Spirit ... By means of his Spirit* represents an instrumental dative, indicating that the worship is under the impulse and direction of the Holy Spirit" (emphasis in original). The Spirit is indeed the dynamic source of the life of a Jesus-follower.

as loss because of the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (3:8); *δι’ ὃν τὰ πάντα ἐζημιώθην* “for whom I have lost all things.”; *ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω*, “that I may gain Christ” (3:8).

In the rest of this section, I will discuss the 8 categories of the sacred texture of Phil 3:1-11 concisely and in turn. Much more can be added to the analysis below, but staying with the focus of the dissertation, my purpose here is to identify key concepts related to the divinity and to lay the basis for exploring the significance of such concepts for spirituality in a next chapter.

3.1. Deity

God is the main character in Christ and the Spirit in Phil 3:1-11. God is mentioned twice in 3:1-11, namely, in 3:3, “worship by the Spirit of God” (*οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες*) and also in 3:9, “the righteousness which is from God” (*τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην*).

In Phil 3:3 *λατρεύειν* is used in a broad metaphorical sense comprising the whole of a Jesus-follower’s existence - everything to which Jesus-followers are impelled by the Spirit¹⁶⁵. God is the object of the worship and service of the Jesus-followers. Jesus-followers serve God “by or through his Spirit.”

The investigation of the ideological texture in Phil 3:9 presented *δικαιοσύνην*, “justification”, as the declaration of God, the just judge, that someone is in the right, that their sins are forgiven, and that they are a true member of the covenant family. It does not describe how people get in to God’s forgiven family; it declares that they are in. According to 3:9 God is the source and provider of this righteousness.

There is also an indirect reference to God in Phil 3:10: *καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ*, “and the power of his resurrection”. In the analysis of the ideological texture of 3:10, “the power of

¹⁶⁵ See Strathmann (1964:62-65), Balz (1990:345), and Louw & Nida (1995:93).

his resurrection”, was brought into direct relation with the power of God himself. The power that raised Jesus from the dead is God’s power at work in Jesus. Jesus possessed the power of God and this is particularly demonstrated in the hour and event of His death. The source of Christ’s power is undoubtedly the power of God.

God is, therefore, presented as a judge in Phil 3:1-11 who declares the true identity of the Philippian Jesus-followers. On a personal level they are in the right and their sins are forgiven; on a corporate level they are true family members of the covenant family of God. This righteous judge, who has ultimate power over death, is the object of praise and service for the righteous Philippian Jesus-followers.

3.2. Holy person

In the New Testament, the holy person par excellence is Jesus the Christ (Robbins 1996a:121). The term “Christ” indicates that Jesus was specially chosen and appointed by God to bring humans into a saving relation to God (1996a:121). There are numerous references to Jesus in Phil 3:1-11, namely, χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ, “rejoice in the Lord” (3:1); καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, “who glory in Christ Jesus” (3:3); ταῦτα ἡγήμαι διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν ζημίαν, “I now consider loss because of Christ” (3:7); ἡγοῦμαι πάντα ζημίαν εἶναι διὰ τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου, “I continue to consider everything as loss because of the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (3:8); ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω, “that I may gain Christ” (3:8); εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ; “be found in him” (3:9); τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτόν, “to know him” (3:10); καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ, “and the power of his resurrection” (3:10); καὶ [τὴν] κοινωνίαν [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ, “and the fellowship of sharing in his suffering” (3:10); συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ, “being conformed to his death” (3:10).

The Philippian Jesus-followers should make Jesus the source and the object of their joy; their confidence and trust is in Jesus as God's anointed (Phil 3:1, 3). O'Brien (1991:350) points out that ἐν κυρίῳ can be translated in a variety of ways¹⁶⁶. For O'Brien (1991:350) ἐν κυρίῳ is the object, sphere and ground of their rejoicing. The Lord is both the occasion and the source of their joy (Bockmuehl 1998:178)¹⁶⁷.

The social and cultural texture of Phil 3:1 highlights important aspects of Paul's usage of "joy". Christ is, also, the proper object of joy, as opposed to Stoic virtue as the object of joy - according to Seneca (Holloway 2004:132). Holloway (2004:132) says,

Particularly relevant to Paul's use of joy in Phil. 3:1a is Seneca's charge to Lucilius at *Ep.* 23.3. that before all else he must learn how to rejoice: *Hoc ante omnia fac, mi Lucili: disce gaudere ...* Lucilius will learn how to rejoice only when he has learned not to overestimate the value of things that do not really matter: *ne gaudeas vanis*. Paul's command to rejoice in the Lord in 3:1a calls for a similar 'reevaluation of values.'

Ἐν κυρίῳ most emphatically forces an individual to reevaluate his or her values "in the Lord." It is important, however, to also take into consideration other hermeneutical possibilities regarding the phrase ἐν κυρίῳ - especially interpretations of the phrase which tend to shift the semantic focus of the word towards the mystical aspects of religion. C.F.D. Moule, quoting Dunn, says that ἐν κυρίῳ has to do with "consciousness of Christ" (1977:61). Hooker (2006:42) notes that for Paul justification is done "in Christ". This justification does not simply come about through the agency of Christ, but it also depends upon the believer himself being in Christ. According to Vanhoozer (2014:28) Jesus-followers are spherically in Christ, that is, "in the sphere of God's control".

Daniel Marguerat (2013) leaves no doubt as to whether he believes Paul was a mystic¹⁶⁸, or not: "Even if his historical heritage made him the emblem of argumentative thought, Paul of Tarsus

¹⁶⁶ Also see Vanhoozer (2014:3-33) for a detailed description of Paul's use of the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ.

¹⁶⁷ Also see Marshall (1991:78).

¹⁶⁸ Adolf Deissmann (1892) and Wilhelm Bousset (1913) were some of the first scholars to put forward the theme of mysticism. Deissmann identified it through his study of the formula ἐν Χριστῷ ("in Christ"), whilst Bousset was led

was a mystic.” For Marguerat (2013a:165) the question of Pauline mysticism is not to know if the apostle has had ecstasy experiences or not. The question is to know how Paul interprets those spiritual experiences and how he relates them to his theological argumentation¹⁶⁹.

The phrase ἐν κυρίῳ, “in the Lord”, can be interpreted in mystical terms, according to Du Toit. Du Toit (2007:144) believes that, if Paul borrowed from mystery religions, whatever he borrowed was “baptized” into something genuinely new and Christian. This new “something”, this Pauline brand of mysticism, is first and foremost characterized, not by intermittent mountain-top occasions, but by the constant experience of the abiding presence and influence of Christ through the Spirit. This, in turn rests upon and flows, not from ascetism or any other kind of human manipulation, but from the appropriation in faithfulness of the objective reality of what God has done in Christ.

Ἐν κυρίῳ, therefore, most probably refers to the resurrected Jesus being the object, sphere, and source of the joy of the Philippian Jesus-followers. This joy is appropriated through faithfulness in the grace of God in Christ (3:9).

Paul now considers all things that were once to his profit, as a disadvantage, because of the Anointed One (Phil 3:7). What is more, Paul continues to consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing and of being known by Jesus his Messiah-King, for whose sake he has lost all things. He considers them excrement that he may gain the Messiah (3:8). And that he can be found in the Messiah, not having his own righteousness, namely, being part of God’s forgiven covenantal family, which is from the law, but that which is through the faithfulness of Christ (3:9). In order that he may know Him and be known by Him, and the power of God displayed in his resurrection from the dead, and the participation in his physical and mental suffering, to be inwardly

to it through his investigation of the connections between Hellenistic Christianity and the mystery religions (Marguerat 2013b:76-77).

¹⁶⁹ Lenski (1961:838) notes that our connection with God is neither mystical nor mysterious. The connection is always made through faith in the grace of God in Christ. I would argue, however, that there is no need for Lenski to create such a dichotomy between the mystical and faith. Perhaps, it is better to say that our mystical connection with God is always made through faith in the grace of God in Christ.

transformed in his nature by dying to self like Jesus (3:10). Paul expects resurrection out from among the physically dead at the return of Jesus, the anointed King (3:11).

3.3. Spirit being

Sacred texts often feature beings who have the nature of a spirit rather than a human being (Robbins 1996a:123). In Phil 3:3 we find a reference to the Spirit: οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες, “worship by the Spirit of God”. The investigation of the argumentative texture in 3:3 showed that the term λατρεύοντες, “worship”, gets its use from the temple context of service to God. This analysis also highlighted that the Spirit marks Jesus-followers as a part of God’s family. The Spirit is the sign of our eschatological hope. Ethically the Spirit enables believers to stand openly before God and each other. The Spirit is the dynamic source of the life of a Jesus-follower. This is the Spirit of Christ which enables us to serve God, according to 3:3.

3.4. Divine history

Many sacred texts presuppose that history and events are directed toward certain results by divine powers. Eschatology and salvation history, which forms a part of this realm in the New Testament, are present in Phil 3:1-11. In eschatology history moves towards the time of “last things” (Robbins 1996a:123). In salvation history God’s plan for humans is worked out through a complicated but ever-ongoing process which moves slowly towards God’s goals (1996a:123-124).

Paul gives a vivid description of salvation-history culminating in the resurrection of Jesus in Phil 3:1-11. He mentions the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus in 3:10: so that I may know Him and be known by Him, and the power of God displayed in his resurrection from the dead, and the participation in his physical and mental suffering, to be inwardly transformed in my nature by dying to myself like Jesus.

The suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus enables Paul to say and experience the following: I now consider all these things, that were once to my profit, as a disadvantage, because of the Anointed One. What is more, I continue to consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing and of being known by Jesus my Messiah-King, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them excrement that I may gain the Messiah. And that I can be found in the Messiah, not having my own righteousness, namely, being part of God's forgiven covenantal family, which is from the law, but that which is through the faithfulness of Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faithfulness, namely, trust (3:7-9). All of this will lead to resurrection out from among the physically dead (3:11).

Therefore, Paul can say: ritual actions such as circumcision is not a necessity for people to become part of God's people. All people are God's people, if they serve God with their whole being through his Spirit (this Spirit confirms people's status as a member of God's new covenant family, and enables people to live as a member of this family; the Spirit is also the basis of your hope for future resurrection); all who put their confidence and trust in Jesus as God's anointed; all who do not put their trust in circumcision, namely, mutilation, nor in a misunderstanding of God's economy of salvation which is based on heritage and achievements (Phil 3:3). Paul's primary objective in 3:3 is to contrast between two ways of existing¹⁷⁰, namely, "in the flesh" as life centered in the self over against God, or as the eschatological people of God - those for whom all life in the present is now service and devotion to God through his Spirit (Fee 1995:Kindle locations 8626-8628). The meaning of the covenant and its symbols has found its perfection in the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Paul, therefore, gives a vivid description of eschatology and of salvation-history in 3:1-11.

¹⁷⁰

See Fowl (2005:Kindle locations 2062-2071) and O'Brien (1991:360-361).

3.5. Human redemption

The transmission of benefit from the divine to the human as a result of events, rituals, or practices has as its aim the transformation of a person to a higher level of existence. The result of this transformation could be the changing of the mortal nature of humans, or perhaps the removal of a burden of impurity or guilt in such a manner that an individual is liberated from powers or practices that are destructive (Robbins 1996a:125-126).

Paul describes the status of a Jesus-follower in Phil 3:9: καὶ εὐρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ, μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει, “and to be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through the faithfulness of Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faithfulness”. God’s righteousness is his covenant dealings with his people, who are thereby constituted a new humanity, a new Israel comprising both Jews and gentiles (Seebass 1971:363). This status includes the forgiveness of sins.

In Phil 3:11 Paul expects resurrection from among the physically dead at the return of Jesus, the anointed King. This is the expected result of the direction that God has taken with history and events. In 3:3 Paul reminded the Philippian Jesus-followers that circumcision is not a necessity for a person to be a part of God’s people. Instead, all who serve God with their whole being through his Spirit; all who put their confidence and trust in Jesus as God’s anointed; all who do not put their trust in circumcision, namely, mutilation, nor in a misunderstanding of God’s economy of salvation which is based on heritage and achievements - are God’s children and will be raised from out among the physically dead at the return of Christ. This resurrection, as was discovered during the analysis of 3:11, is neither a special reward for martyrs, nor a resurrection directly after death, nor a special

resurrection before the parousia, but the end-time bodily resurrection of the just that Paul expected to take place at the return of Christ. For Paul, this is the goal of everything¹⁷¹.

3.6. Human commitment

This aspect of sacred texture has to do with the response of humans to the divine initiative in their lives, at the level of their practices (Robbins 1996a:126). Paul highlights a couple of important characteristics of the life of a believer in Phil 3:2-9.

These characteristics include: a heightened sense of awareness for the dangers posed by the Judaizers, namely, those hungry, unclean, wandering packs of dogs, those who do evil, those Jesus-followers who cut everything to pieces with their Jewish obsession with proselyte circumcision as the unnegotiable sign of covenant membership for all gentiles (Phil 3:2); an accurate understanding of the identity of God's covenant family, namely, all who serve God with their whole being through his Spirit; all who put their confidence and trust in Jesus as God's anointed; all who do not put their trust in circumcision, namely, mutilation, nor in a misunderstanding of God's economy of salvation which is based on heritage and achievements (3:3); If anyone else thinks that they have reason to put their confidence in these things, Paul believes he has more; he received the sign of the covenant, namely, circumcision, on the eighth day of his life; he was a part of God's covenant people, Israel, from birth and he shared in its privileges from day one; he was from Israel's most prestigious tribe, Benjamin, and he had not been paganized by Hellenism; he kept the law of Moses strictly as a Pharisee, and he was vigorous in his pursuit of keeping the law and his ancestral traditions, even up to the point of persecuting the Jesus-followers in the same way an army would pursue its enemy; in terms of perfection in the law, he was without fault; Paul now considers all these things, that were once to his profit, as a disadvantage, because of the Anointed One; what is more, he continues to consider

¹⁷¹ In Phil 3:12-16 Paul describes his views on the future in more detail.

everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing and of being known by Jesus his Messiah-King, for whose sake he has lost all things; Paul considers them excrement that he may gain the Messiah and that he can be found in the Messiah, not having his own righteousness, namely, being part of God's forgiven covenantal family, which is from the law, but that which is through the faithfulness of Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faithfulness, namely, loyalty, fidelity and trust (3:4-9).

3.7. Religious community

Human commitment regularly is not simply an individual matter, but it is also a matter of participating with other people in activities that nurture and fulfil commitment to divine ways. In Christian terminology this is the realm of ecclesiology, namely, an assembly of people called out to worship God and enact obedience to God. Religious community includes commitments to God, to people inside the community, and to people outside the community (Robbins 1996a:127-128).

Paul confirms the communal nature of the life of a Jesus-follower on two occasions in Phil 3. In 3:1 Paul refers to the Philippian community of Jesus-followers as "my family": For what remains to be said, my covenantal family members, make Jesus, the King, the source and the object of your joy! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, since this keeps you safe as citizens of the heavenly commonwealth. The analysis of 3:1 affirmed that, in using the expression ἀδελφοί μου in 3:1, Paul's desire was to establish a relational ethos among Jesus-followers in the colony by which competition for honour among persons who took seriously their identity as brothers and sisters in Christ would be discouraged. Family members in Christ are not in competition with each other for higher honours. A community of Jesus-followers much rather seeks to serve one another in humility according to the example of Jesus himself (2:6-11).

In Phil 3:3 Paul says: “For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh” (ἡμεῖς γάρ ἐσμεν ἡ περιτομή, οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες). Paul’s use of ἡμεῖς, “we”, is clearly a reference to ἀδελφοί μου in 3:1. That is, ἡμεῖς also refers to the identity of God’s people in much the same way that ἀδελφοί μου did in 3:1. All who serve God with their whole being through his Spirit; all who put their confidence and trust in Jesus as God’s anointed; all who do not put their trust in circumcision, namely, mutilation, nor in a misunderstanding of God’s economy of salvation which is based on heritage and achievements - these are God’s people, namely, the religious community which he himself creates. This is a community which is not in competition with each other for higher honours.

3.8. Ethics

Ethics relates to the responsibility of humans to think and act in special ways in any circumstances. These special ways of acting and thinking are driven by a commitment to God (Robbins 1996a:129). Perhaps the closest thing to an ethical principle in Philippians is found in Phil 2:6-11. Three interrelated characteristics which describe what it means to be conformed to Christ’s death (3:10) emerge from 2:6-11. First, it is the result of seeking the benefit of others. Second, it is the result of willed self-emptying. Third, it is the result of obedience to God (Fowl 2005:Kindle locations 2166-2172).

The analysis of Phil 3:9 showed that 2:5-11 is the heart of Paul’s letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers. The influence of 2:6-11 on 3:4-11 was highlighted by Oakes (2001:104). It is, therefore, possible to refer to Paul’s testimony in 3:4-11 as an example of how 2:6-11 came to fruition in the life of the apostle himself.

<u>Specific character</u>	<u>Depiction:</u> <u>reason/source/means</u>	<u>Depiction:</u> <u>object/ultimate goal</u>
God	<p>τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην (3:9); God as the source of righteousness.</p> <p>καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ (3:9); God as the source of power over death.</p>	οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες (3:3); God as the object of worship.
The Spirit	οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες (3:3); the Spirit as the means of worship.	
Jesus	<p>ταῦτα ἡγῆμαι διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν ζημίαν (3:7); ἡγοῦμαι πάντα ζημίαν εἶναι διὰ τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου</p>	χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ (3:1); καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (3:3); Jesus as the object of joy.

	<p>μου (3:8); Christ and knowledge of Christ Jesus as the Lord as the reason for loss.</p>	<p>ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω (3:8); εὐρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ (3:9); τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτὸν (3:10); καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως (3:10); καὶ [τὴν] κοινωνίαν [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ (3:10); Christ and knowledge of Christ, his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his suffering as the ultimate goal of Paul's life.</p> <p>συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ (3:10); conformation to the death of Christ as the ultimate goal of Paul's life.</p> <p>εἰ πως καταντήσω εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν (3:11);</p>
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		resurrection from out among the physically dead as the ultimate goal of Paul's life.
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Diagram 10: The Sacred texture in Phil 3:1-11

In the final section of this chapter I will present my translation of the Greek text of Phil 3:1-11. I will also provide a brief description of the logic involved in my exegetical and hermeneutical choices in each verse.

4. Translation of Phil 3:1-11

In this section I will present my translation of the Greek text of Phil 3:1-11. I will present a translation of each verse which is based on the exegetical findings of chapter two and three. This translation, therefore, functions only as a summary of the discussion of the exegetical options available, as well as of the exegetical choices which were already made in chapter two and three. The translation, then, serves to illuminate the exegetical findings of my study, rather than attempting to be a philologically “correct” translation.

Paul begins this section of his letter in Phil 3:1 by saying: Τὸ λοιπόν, ἀδελφοί μου, χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ. τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν ὑμῖν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐκ ὀκνηρόν, ὑμῖν δὲ ἀσφαλές. My translation of 3:1 is as follows: “for what remains to be said, my family, make Jesus, the King, the source and the object of your joy! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again (things regarding what constitutes membership in God’s covenant and the joy that comes with it - I have discussed it with you previously and I have referred to this earlier in the letter, and I will refer to it in what is to follow here), since this keeps you safe as citizens of the heavenly commonwealth.”

In Phil 3:2 Paul describes the opponents that are posing a threat to the Jesus-followers in Philippi: βλέπετε τοὺς κύνας, βλέπετε τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας, βλέπετε τὴν κατατομήν. My translation of 3:2 is as follows: “watch out for those hungry, unclean, wandering packs of dogs! Watch out for those who do evil! Watch out for those Jesus-followers who cut everything to pieces with their Jewish obsession with proselyte circumcision as a sign of covenant membership!”

In Phil 3:3 Paul describes the characteristics of the people of God: ἡμεῖς γάρ ἐσμεν ἡ περιτομή, οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες. My translation of 3:3 is as follows: “we are God’s family: all who serve God with their whole being through his Spirit (this Spirit confirms your status as a member of God’s new covenant family, and enables you to live as a member of this family; the Spirit is also the basis of your hope for future resurrection); all who put their confidence, loyalty, fidelity and trust in Jesus as God’s anointed; all who do not put their trust in proselyte circumcision, namely, mutilation, nor in a misunderstanding of God’s economy of salvation which is based on heritage and achievements.”

In Phil 3:4 Paul speaks “foolishly”: καίπερ ἐγὼ ἔχων πεποιθήσιν καὶ ἐν σαρκί. Εἴ τις δοκεῖ ἄλλος πεποιθέναι ἐν σαρκί, ἐγὼ μᾶλλον. My translation of 3:4 is as follows: “though I myself have reasons to put my trust in heritage and achievements. If any other person thinks they have reasons to trust in these things, I have more.”

In Phil 3:5 Paul presents a progressive argument by means of his personal testimony: περιτομῇ ὀκταήμερος, ἐκ γένους Ἰσραὴλ, φυλῆς Βενιαμίν, Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων, κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος. My translation of 3:5 is as follows: “I received the sign of the covenant, namely, circumcision, on the eighth day of my life; I was a part of God’s covenant people, Israel, from birth and I have shared in its privileges from day one; I am from Israel’s most prestigious tribe, Benjamin, and I have not been paganized by Hellenism; I have kept the law of Moses strictly as a Pharisee.

In Phil 3:6 Paul continues his personal testimony: κατὰ ζήλος διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος. My translation of 3:6 is as follows: “I was vigorous

in my pursuit of keeping the law and my ancestral traditions, even up to the point of persecuting the Jesus-followers in the same way an army would pursue its enemy. In terms of perfection in the law, I was without fault.”

In Phil 3:7 Paul uses terms from financial accounting to refer to his past: [Ἀλλ’] ἅτινα ἦν μοι κέρδη, ταῦτα ἡγήμαι διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν ζημίαν. My translation of 3:7 is as follows: “I now consider all these things that were to my profit and in which I could boast, as a disadvantage, because of the Anointed One.”

In Phil 3:8 Paul continues his use of terms from financial accounting in a repetitive-progressive manner: ἀλλὰ μενοῦνγε καὶ ἡγοῦμαι πάντα ζημίαν εἶναι διὰ τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου μου, δι’ ὃν τὰ πάντα ἐζημιώθην, καὶ ἡγοῦμαι σκύβαλα, ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω. My translation of 3:8 is as follows: “what is more, I continue to consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus my Messiah-King, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them excrement that I may gain the Messiah.”

In Phil 3:9 Paul continues his in-depth description of 3:7-8, as well as of the dynamics of justification: καὶ εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ, μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει. My translation of 3:9 is as follows: “and that I can be found in the Messiah, not having my own righteousness, namely, being part of God’s forgiven covenantal family, which is from the law, but that which is through the faithfulness of Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faithfulness, namely, loyalty, fidelity and trust.”

In Phil 3:10 Paul describes the process of transformation involved in sanctification: τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ καὶ [τὴν] κοινωνίαν [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ, συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ. My translation of 3:10 is as follows: “in order that I may know Him and be known by Him, and the power of God displayed in his resurrection from the dead, and the participation in his physical and mental suffering, to be inwardly transformed in my nature by dying to self like Jesus.”

In Phil 3:11 Paul concludes this part of his letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers by describing the nature of his future hope: εἴ πως καταντήσω εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν. My translation of 3:11 is as follows: “I am expecting resurrection out from among the physically dead at the return of Jesus, the anointed King.”

5. Conclusion

In this chapter I presented an analysis of the ideological texture and the sacred texture of Phil 3:1-11.

From the exegetical work done on both the inner texture (in chapter two) and the intertextuality (in this chapter) of Phil 3:1-11, we were able to see Paul as a pastoral theologian doing theology “on the move” (Longenecker 2020a:6). Phil 3:1-11 displays Paul’s masterful ability of “pastoral theologizing ... in an effort to help communities of Jesus-followers shape their identities in relation to a worldview of what God has already done in Christ and would bring to completion through Christ” (2020a:6).

On a micro-level the text of Phil 3:1-11 presents two important dynamics in this chapter. First, our investigation of the ideological texture and the sacred texture indicated that Paul’s autobiographical sketch in 3:4-11 was presented to the Philippians as an example of the humility and faithfulness of Jesus in 2:6-11. This attitude of humility and faithfulness is expressed in Paul’s desire to be transformed, that is, to know the power of the resurrection of Jesus, to share in the suffering of Jesus, and to be conformed to his death (3:10). The telos of Paul’s life is described as resurrection from the dead (3:11). Second, in our analysis of the ideological texture and the sacred texture of 3:1-11 it was suggested that, because of God’s action in Jesus, God has restored humanity. The Philippian Jesus-followers can rejoice in the Lord because they are part of God’s covenantal family.

The main aim in chapter four which now follows, is to use the insights gained in chapter two and in this chapter to further engage the problem statement formulated earlier: addressing the concern that very limited use is made of the biblical text as the privileged text of Christian spirituality; and an irresponsible use of the biblical text in many instances when it indeed is used as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. I will attempt to sort through the very dense and currently popular academic fields of spirituality and Christian spirituality in order to better grasp what Christian spirituality entails. My focus will be on possible ways in which the findings from the exegetical study of Phil 3:1-11 can contribute to the study of Christian spirituality. Some traditional theological categories, namely, justification, adoption, and sanctification can be fruitfully brought into dialogue with the findings of the socio-rhetorical exegesis done in chapter two on 3:1-11.

Chapter four

Christian Spirituality: Phil 3:1-11 as Point of Departure

1. Introduction

The biblical foundation of all Christian spirituality is “a wellspring for believers, a deep reservoir of images and ways of knowing God” (Bowe 2003:Kindle locations 361-363). The contemporary significance of the findings of the exegetical work which was done in chapter two and chapter three of this study is considered in this chapter. Both the significance for Christian spirituality of Phil 3:1-11, as well as the practical significance of 3:1-11 will be presented here (Smith 2008:176). I am of the opinion that certain aspects of the traditional theological categories of Christology, soteriology, eschatology, as well as ecclesiology can be fruitfully brought into dialogue with the findings of the exegetical work which was done in chapter two and chapter three. I am not attempting to present a complete systematic theological layout of these traditional categories. This is not possible since I am presenting the insights of only a small part of one letter of the entire Pauline letter corpus. I do suggest, however, that the findings from the exegetical work done on 3:1-11 in chapter two and chapter three can serve to either confirm, challenge or deepen the insights provided by these traditional theological categories and that this work can serve as a useful and even valuable basis for a larger, more comprehensive approach to Christian spirituality. I will, therefore, also present suggestions regarding the ways in which the findings of the exegetical study of 3:1-11 can contribute to Christian spirituality and to its study.

This chapter builds on the previous two chapters, as it wants to explore how Phil 3:1-11 can be read in relation to Christian spirituality. In chapter two and chapter three of this dissertation a

socio-rhetorical exegetical study on 3:1-11, within its context of the letter as a whole, enabled us to get closer to answers to three questions in the context of the unique situation faced by the Jesus-followers in Philippi. These questions can assist in exploring the dissertation's main research questions about Christian spirituality informed by the Bible and human transformation as formulated in chapter 1. The first question is: from what can be gathered from Philippians, what did Paul think is wrong in God's world¹⁷²? Our investigation suggested that the problem can be described as relational dysfunction between God and humanity, as well as relational dysfunction between human beings. Three forms of power were identified as the cause of such relational dysfunction, namely, the power of sin, the power of culture, and suprahuman powers. In the context of the Philippian Jesus-followers, this relational dysfunction presented itself in three distinctive forms. The first was a leadership dysfunction in the form of a conflict between female leaders (the power of sin). The second was pressure from a group of rival teachers who preached a message that can be described as ethnocentric covenantalism (the power of culture). The third relational dysfunction in the Philippian context was caused by the enmity of the many surrounding gentiles who probably perceived the Philippian Jesus-followers as religious deviants who were upsetting the suprahuman powers, namely, the gods, because of their worship of one God only (the power of the suprahuman).

The second question is: what did Paul think God is doing to fix this¹⁷³? In this instance, our investigation indicated that God addressed the problem of all relational dysfunction by means of the Christ-event, namely, the suffering, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus. Our investigation showed that Paul is of the strong conviction that through God's display of power in raising Jesus from the dead, God's reign over all other forms of power was confirmed. Paul's ideological matrix is, therefore, that Jesus appeared as a human being, suffered, died and was resurrected from the dead. This is what is referred to as the Christ-event. The Christ-event confirms and catalyses two crucial realities.

¹⁷² See Longenecker (2020b:171-186).

¹⁷³ See Gorman (2020:187-209).

The first reality is about the identity of God: our investigation of the sacred texture of Phil 3:1-11 highlighted as a crucial, focal aspect, the identity of the deity. The deity was presented as the dynamic source of restored humanity. God, as the just Judge, has restored a dysfunctional humanity through the faithfulness of Jesus. This faithfulness is displayed through his suffering, death and resurrection from the dead. Our exploration of the repetitive texture of 3:1-11 showed that Jesus is Paul's primary subject. Paul refers to Jesus thirteen times in only eleven verses. Paul refers to Jesus as κύριος, "Lord" (in 3:1 and 3:8), and Χριστὸς, "Christ" (in 3:3 and 3:7-9). It appears that for Paul this means that the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead, confirms that Jesus is the son of God; it confirms that Jesus is Israel's long-awaited Messiah, namely, their anointed King (Paul uses the title "Christ" to refer to this reality); it also confirms that Jesus is the Ruler of the world (as opposed to Caesar who was believed to be the world's true "lord"; Paul uses the title "Lord" for Jesus to refer to this reality). Jesus is the object, source and occasion for the joy and the boasting of the Philippian Jesus-followers. The power of God raised Jesus from the dead (3:10), and Jesus-followers now worship God through His Spirit (3:3). The Spirit of God, then, is the dynamic life-force of the Jesus-following community. In the example of 2:6-11, I suggest, Paul presents the power of God which conquered all other forms of power, namely, power through humility and faithfulness.

The second reality is about the true identity of God's people: our analysis of the sacred texture highlighted the results of the initiative of the deity in relationship with humanity. God has acted decisively with all competing powers in the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus. Those who give their loyalty, fidelity and trust to Jesus are part of God's family, namely, they are a part of the covenant relationship between God and Abraham. In Gen 17 the circumcision is given by God to Abraham as a sign of the covenant with Israel. Through the Christ-event, all those who follow Jesus are now part of God's restored humanity.

The third question is: what are the implications of God's saving action in the Christ-event in the life of a Jesus-follower, as presented in Philippians¹⁷⁴? "More briefly, we may say that, for Paul, God is now enabling transformative participation in the life of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This can all be captured in a single word: life" (Gorman 2020:188). God's family is characterised by their humility and faithfulness, that is, their desire to be transformed by sharing in the suffering of Christ, by being conformed to the death of Jesus, as well as to be resurrected from the dead themselves. Paul, as far as can be determined today, wrote the letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers to encourage them to remain loyal and faithful to the example of humility that the life, suffering and death of Jesus presented to them. This example I have termed as Paul's spirituality of weakness and vulnerability (Manjaly 2009:31).

In this chapter the focus now shifts to the ways in which the biblical text functions as the privileged text of Christian spirituality.

This chapter is divided into three sections. First, I will present an analysis of the art of biblical interpretation. A short exploration of hermeneutics is relevant in this chapter given my suggestion that the Bible is used irresponsibly in many instances when it is used as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. A well-developed insight into the dynamics involved in the art of hermeneutics is, in my opinion, an important aspect of the process of equipping the reader to use the Bible responsibly as the privileged text of Christian spirituality¹⁷⁵.

Second, a definition of Christian spirituality, as well as a description of the characteristics of Christian spirituality is presented. The definition and the characteristics of Christian spirituality will

¹⁷⁴ See Gorman (2020:187-209).

¹⁷⁵ Diagram 11 presented in this section provides a summary of the dynamics involved in the process of hermeneutics. This diagram can valuably serve as a framework for biblical understanding, explanation and appropriation. The exegetical work which was done in chapter two and chapter three of this study also takes this diagram as its framework for biblical interpretation and understanding. In the current chapter this diagram also serves as the framework for expressing the contemporary significance of the exegetical work which was done in chapter two and chapter three.

serve the purpose of providing a framework within which the relevance of a biblical hermeneutic for Christian spirituality can be fruitfully applied.

Finally, I will attempt to present the relevance of Paul's compact, yet significant insights in Phil 3:1-11 for Christian spirituality. I will attempt to answer certain key questions regarding Paul's spirituality in 3:1-11: what are the key aspects of Christian spirituality which can be gathered from Paul's deep and thick description in 3:1-11? Is it possible for these insights into Paul's spirituality, as presented in 3:1-11, to make a contribution to the current discussion on Christian spirituality? What contributions does Paul's spirituality in 3:1-11 make to this discussion? How does Paul's spirituality in 3:1-11 influence the current discussion on Christian spirituality? These questions will guide our exploration in the final section of this chapter. For our immediate purposes, however, we turn our attention to an analysis of the biblical text as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. The primary component of this section highlights the dynamics of biblical interpretation, namely, hermeneutics and exegesis.

2. The privileged text of Christian spirituality: reading the biblical text

Our investigation of the ideological texture of Phil 3:1-11 indicated that the Christ-event creates a restored humanity. This Christ-event benefits humanity not only when they believe this good news, but the Christ-event also benefits humanity when they participate in transformative justice corporately and individually. In other words, the Christ-event not only secures the status of Jesus-followers as being righteous, it also empowers Jesus-followers to live lives characterised by humility and faithfulness.

The Bible is the privileged text of Christian spirituality since it contains the foundational texts regarding the Christ-event into which believers weave their lives: "the Bible is a great God-given resource and guide to true Christian spirituality" (Adam 2004:19). Thurston says, "New Testament

spirituality is bound by the text: that record of the early Christians' experience of the power of God manifested in the person of Jesus" (2005:58). The fundamental source for any authentic Christian spirituality is the "the incarnate and living word" (Cunningham & Egan 1996:29). Kourie (2000:14) confirms the biblical text as the foundation of Christian spirituality. Perrin (2007:39) confirms the Christian Bible as the privileged text for Christian spirituality, because it contains the story of Jesus. The biblical story includes us and our stories in it and therefore transforms our thinking and behaviour (Stevens & Green 2003:ix).

Peterson (1997:Kindle locations 80-82) is adamant that the biblical text should function as the primary source of Christian spirituality. Whenever we step outside of the story of the biblical text and make ourselves the most authoritative text of our spirituality, our spirituality tends to develop into neurosis, selfishness, becomes pretentious and can even turn violent. Peterson (2006:Kindle locations 1036) is alarmed by how extensively this spirit has invaded the church. Emphasizing the primacy of the biblical text could, therefore, provide a meaningful addition to the current discussions on Christian spirituality.

Berling (2006:41) says that the disciplines of biblical studies, comparative religions, and history of Christianity serve extensively to supply "positive data and the hermeneutical contexts for understanding Christian Spirituality"¹⁷⁶. Documents or texts describing a particular experience, movement, or person in order to remind us of the continuity which binds us with the past are studied in the historical approach to spirituality (Kourie 2009:163). All Christian spiritual traditions are rooted in the Christian Bible. This is the text that is studied in the historical approach to spirituality. It is also the approach followed in this dissertation. Christian spirituality is fundamentally concerned with following the way of Jesus Christ. The spiritual traditions throughout history are attempts to reinterpret the Bible within specific contexts and cultural circumstances (Sheldrake 2013:7). The

¹⁷⁶ Berling adds a third constitutive discipline, namely, comparative religions, to the two constitutive disciplines delineated by Schneiders, namely, the Bible and history of Christianity (Kourie 2009:160).

biblical text, whenever it functions as the basic and authoritative text for our spirituality, has to be interpreted.

The written biblical text “represents an enormous concentration of energy” (Lategan 2009b:66). This “exceptional concentration of communicative energy” (2009b:66) presents the essence of the search of centuries to live a meaningful life, to find salvation and to come to an understanding of God’s will. The written text is ready to release this energy “in a surplus of meaning in an ongoing process of sense-making” (2009b:66). As was mentioned earlier, a well-developed insight into the art of hermeneutics and exegesis has the potential of equipping the reader of a biblical text to interpret the biblical text in a more responsible manner. In the following section I further probe the dynamics involved in the process of hermeneutics and exegesis that enable the modern reader of a biblical text in all efforts of coming to an understanding of the communicative thrust of a biblical text in a responsible manner.

2.1. Biblical interpretation

Margaret Mitchell, in a striking statement referring to Paul, says: “Amazingly, the controversial interpreter was to become the model and mentor for all of Christian biblical interpretation in antiquity ... Paul is received in the early church not only as the source of texts that require hermeneutical ingenuity, but he becomes the master hermeneutician and exegetical mentor for many early Christian interpreters” (2020:296-297).

Our task as modern readers of the biblical text require much the same as it did for Paul and his reading of the ancient scriptures in light of the Christ-event. “Interpretation does matter” (Lategan 2009b:103). Our approach to the reading of a biblical text, as well as our understanding of the process and dynamics of reading does matter. England (2011:48-49) refers to the New Testament as a “sacred

classic” text, saying that classic texts “never tire of speaking ... they resist closure and definitive readings”. The New Testament text invites readers but it also “reads and writes its guests” (2011:48).

In the current chapter the primary focus is on the ways in which the insights gained from the exegetical work which was done on Phil 3:1-11 (in chapter two and chapter three of this study) can serve as a counterweight to the shortcomings present in many modern approaches to, and definitions of, Christian spirituality. A short overview of the history of the academic interest in the relationship of the Bible to spirituality provides a framework for understanding the different forms this relationship between the Bible and spirituality has taken through the centuries, as well as provide insight into the current characteristics of the relationship between the Bible and spirituality. There has been a “sea-change of considerable magnitude” in terms of the academic interest in the relationship of the Bible and spirituality (Kourie 2011:134). Until the thirteenth century the study of spirituality was a “*unitary* endeavour” (emphasis in original) (Kourie 2009:156). There was no knowledge of modern theological divisions. All reflection was done with the Bible as the primary source with scriptural commentary the most common genre. Christian knowledge was a synthesis of “biblical exegesis, speculative reasoning and mystical contemplation” (2009:156). From the thirteenth century onwards, spirituality began a process of separation. During the twentieth and twenty-first centuries spirituality emerged as a “new” discipline which is in the process of “being liberated from its tutelage to dogmatics” (2009:157). Modern Christian spirituality, then, recognizes the fulness and complexity of a human being; it is holistic and it effects cognitive, volitional and affective change in human beings (2009:158).

Sandra Schneiders (1985:16-19) also describes the history of approaches to the Bible when she considers the differences between approaches to the Bible of the patristic and medieval periods, and those of post-Renaissance or modern times. She indicates that there are major differences on three levels. Firstly, a difference in understanding the term “literal sense” between the two periods - for the ancients it meant the body of the text as opposed to its religious meaning; for the post-Renaissance or modern reader it points to the meaning intended by the author. Secondly, a difference in

understanding of the term “spiritual sense” between the two periods - the ancients understood the scriptures as inspired by God. This inspiration is understood by a model where every word of the scriptures is directly attributable to God and suffused with meaning worthy of God; they believed the scriptures to be concerned uniquely with God’s revelation in Christ; until the Christological and salvific significance of the text had been uncovered the true meaning had not been reached; the word of God has multiple meanings corresponding to the richness of the mystery of the Word made flesh and to the complexity of levels and phases in the realization of the Christian mystery. Thirdly, the relationship to tradition - for the ancient the tradition of faith is the universally accepted context for all biblical interpretation; for the modern exegete “the immediacy of participation in an interpretative tradition was shattered” (1985:19). In the place of the immediacy of participation in an interpretive tradition came an emphasis on scholarly investigation and mathematical exactitude and certitude¹⁷⁷. Schneider’s comment in the last sentence of her article should be emphasized: “postcritical interpretation ... will no doubt involve an aesthetic appreciation and spiritual sensitivity that have long been almost absent from the world of biblical scholarship” (1985:18)¹⁷⁸.

Pieter De Villiers, in his 2017 Presidential Address during the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality Annual Meeting, confirmed the anticipation of Schneiders (regarding an aesthetic appreciation and a spiritual sensitivity that will characterize postcritical interpretation of the Bible). In his opening thoughts on the troublesome current state of biblical interpretation in the academic study of spirituality he says, “The Bible seems to have lost its reputation as the living source

¹⁷⁷ Bonnie Thurston (2005:55) notes that “since the nineteenth century, New Testament scholarship has been dominated by approaches that view the text as exclusively as text, without reference to the experiences that gave rise to it. Such scholarship emphasizes lexical and grammatical studies, form, redaction, and source criticisms, and historical and sociological analysis of the text ... Little attempt is made to understand the experience of those who produced it or the influence it continues to exert on those who view it as authoritative.”

¹⁷⁸ This is by no means, however, a new phenomenon. Bullough, as far back as 1954, already states that: “during the last ten years or so, there has been a greatly increased awakening, among Christians all over the world to the importance of the spiritual sense of Scripture, to the value of the symbolic approach to Scripture, and to a consciousness of the influence of biblical symbolism upon the spiritual life of the Christian” (1954:343).

of faith” (2019a:1). De Villiers then argues of the need for an existential reading of the Bible - as opposed to a merely academic reading of the Bible¹⁷⁹.

Academic readings of the Bible are often times experienced as “intellectual sophistry, as irrelevant, if not irreverent, lapsing into technical, historical intricacies with no or little efficacious impact or value” (De Villiers 2019a:1). Mysticism, on the other hand, is rooted in an existential reading of the Bible. It differs from academic readings which investigates the Bible in terms of doctrine and ethics. An existential reading by no means, however, has an anti-intellectual attitude towards academic readings. De Villiers emphasizes that biblical spirituality is known by its extensive use of academic scholarship, but only as a part of a spiritual hermeneutics which accounts for the spiritual nature, claims and outcomes of biblical texts. Such a spiritual hermeneutic approach is more comprehensive than one-sided academic readings which makes it difficult for readers to identify a biblical text as a text “about the beauty of God’s surprising, powerful presence in a tired world” (2019a:1)¹⁸⁰.

De Villiers is unambiguous and exact in his identification of the ultimate goal of a comprehensive approach of biblical spirituality: “The comprehensive approach of biblical spirituality is ultimately a quest for re-enchanting the Bible as a book of beauty and as the living source of the spiritual journey by addressing some of the causes of the current malaise” (2019a:3). Appreciation of the thick aesthetical nature of biblical texts will inspire Bible readers to invite it as a companion in their quest for ultimate meaning (2019a:15)¹⁸¹.

De Villiers, in my opinion, makes a very important contribution to the current academic discussion surrounding the nature of a biblical text, as well as the interpretation of the biblical text

¹⁷⁹ Biblical interpretation calls for an intellectual as well as a contemplative approach (Sheldrake 2005:460).

¹⁸⁰ Here De Villiers mentions the widespread appreciation of the spiritual practice of *lectio divina* as a contemplative reading that is done in recognition of the Bible as a spiritual text (*lectio*), that comprises a critical, also distanced *meditatio* on the text, as well as the prayerful desire to be found in a relationship with the divine (2019a:3).

¹⁸¹ Kourie shares that a major reason for this change of perspective is “the fact that biblical hermeneutics has witnessed a major heterodox methodological explosion within the last few decades” (2011:133). The serious limitations of the historical-critical method as a methodological tool for biblical interpretation have been acknowledged (2011:133).

within the academic field of spirituality. A comprehensive approach of biblical spirituality, which includes both an “academic” reading of the biblical text, and an “existential/aesthetic” reading of the biblical text, are vital for useful and valuable hermeneutics and exegesis¹⁸². Elsewhere, De Villiers (2019b:7) refers to this as a “synergy between an historical and a theological approach.” Kourie (2011:135) refers to working “between two poles”, namely, reading a biblical text faithfully to its historical and literary context and a reading that respects the biblical text as a sacred text which leads to human transformation. Schneiders (2005b:294) describes this “spiritual exegesis” as belonging to the area of hermeneutics, rather than to the area of exegesis, that is, “to interpretation which is based on critical exegesis but not arrested on the analytical level” (2005a:294). Sheldrake uses the phrase “a critical dialogue with the text” (2013:12-13) to argue along the same lines as de Villiers and Schneiders¹⁸³.

The primary emphasis of my argument is on the importance of sequence, namely, interpretation which is based on critical exegesis but not arrested on the analytical level. In other words, the biblical text as well as responsible exegesis of the biblical text should be the privileged text of Christian spirituality. Even though it might be true that, as De Villiers says, “the spiritual nature of biblical texts requires that these texts should ultimately be read theologically or spiritually” (2019b:8), it remains critically important, I suggest, that biblical texts should, as a matter of order of priority, be read historically. Sound hermeneutics should build its interpretation of a biblical text on the solid foundation provided by sound exegesis of the historical and literary dimensions of the biblical text. The synergy between a historical and a theological approach is, therefore, a structured synergy (2019b:8). New Testament spirituality “is bound by the text” (Thurston 2005:58). As students

¹⁸² “The Bible is primarily a book not of information but of formation, not merely a book to be analyzed, scrutinized, and discussed but a sacred book to nurture us, to unify our hearts and minds, and to serve as a constant source of contemplation” (Nouwen 2010:Kindle locations 251-253). The biblical text is a text which enables and encourages divine transformation (*theosis*), “not intellectual or ‘small-self’ coziness” (Rohr 2010:7).

¹⁸³ Sheldrake (2013) expands on this basic point by indicating two extreme possibilities when interpreting a biblical text, namely, ignoring the context completely or approaching the text thinking that only the author’s intention matters. He proposes a third path which he terms “a critical dialogue with the text”: “This allows the wisdom of a text to challenge us, while at the same time it allows our own horizons their proper place. The possibilities of a text, beyond the author’s original intention, are evoked in a creative way by the new world in which it finds itself” (Sheldrake 2013:13).

of New Testament spiritualities, exegesis (drawing out the meaning that is in a text) and not eisegeses (reading into the text what might or might not be there) remains our primary responsibility (2005:58). A theological reading, therefore, follows on, accompanies, or develops the historical aspects of the text (De Villiers 2019b:8). Thurston (2005:59) quotes Schneiders as a reminder of the need to give proper consideration to the fact that the New Testament is a first-century document: “no one who is serious about biblical spirituality should be excused from the study requisite for a well-grounded understanding of biblical texts in their own historical-cultural contexts and according to their literary genres and theological categories”¹⁸⁴.

The ways in which the exegetical findings of Phil 3:1-11 - done by means of the socio-rhetorical criticism of Robbins - can be brought into useful and valuable dialogue with current discussions on Christian spirituality is the primary focus of this chapter.

In the following section the art and the science of hermeneutics, namely, of the nature, conditions, and process of understanding, is considered, with the aim of considering its relevance for the Bible as privileged text in spirituality. Hermeneutics should be understood as the theory, and exegesis as the practice of interpretation (Lategan 2009a:13-14). Reflection on the process of interpretation is, of course, an attempt to provide a framework which presents guidelines for a more responsible understanding, explanation and appropriation of the biblical text - all the more so when the Bible is claimed as privileged text.

¹⁸⁴ See also Sheldrake (2005:460-462): “historical consciousness is a basic element in the interpretation of religious texts. Apart from anything else, it reminds us of the irreducibly contextual nature, and therefore particularity, of spirituality and spiritual values ... Thus, spiritualities do not exist on some ideal plane outside the limitations of history. The origins and development of spiritual traditions reflect the specific circumstances of time and place, as well as the psychological state of the people involved. They consequently embody values that are socially conditioned.”

Thurston reminds the reader to make use of appropriate historical-critical methodology when reading a biblical text: “the world of the New Testament had a lively awareness of, and interest in, both material and spiritual dynamics of life. There is no one ‘New Testament spirituality,’ but a variety of ‘spiritualities’ reflecting both the many writers of the New Testament books and the many communities and cultures in which early Christians found themselves. To uncover these spiritualities, one studies persons encountered in the text and those who wrote them, texts that describe what the early Christians did and/or texts that prescribe or prohibit, texts that reflect the dos and don’ts of early Christian practice. In each instance the enquiry is bound by the limits of the historical period and by what the texts themselves say, and is to be carried out using appropriate historical-critical methodology” (Thurston 2005:63).

2.2. Hermeneutics: understanding, explanation and appropriation

My argument is that a historical approach to the study of spirituality, with its primary concern an examination of documents or historical texts which recount the spiritual experience of those who have gone before us, is crucial. Whilst the biblical text of Phil 3:1-11 was studied by means of socio-rhetorical exegesis in chapter two and chapter three, in this chapter, a hermeneutical reading of these findings - with the aim of establishing its relevance for Christian spirituality - is pursued. However, a short overview of the dynamics involved in the process of hermeneutics and exegesis will provide parameters for the relationship between the Bible and spirituality.

Hermeneutics¹⁸⁵ is the discipline that concerns itself with the nature, the conditions and the process of understanding (Lategan 2009a:14). According to Ricoeur, “hermeneutics has a double focus: understanding and explanation (i.e. the expansion of knowledge), on the one hand, and appropriation (i.e. the expansion of subjectivity), on the other” (Schneiders 2005a:26). The goal of hermeneutics is ultimately to act out what we have heard, “to translate what we have heard into a way of life” (Cunningham & Egan 1996:33). In general terms, hermeneutics can be described as the art of understanding (Lategan 2009a:14). The interpretation of the New Testament is, therefore, fuelled by a desire for understanding (2009a:13). Lategan describes this understanding as an art and a science

¹⁸⁵ Lategan presents a very concise and helpful overview of the development from general to specific hermeneutics (2009a:15-20). He cites the works of Aristotle, Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur, and Tracy in this regard.

Lategan also provides a slightly more detailed overview of the defining moments in the development of biblical hermeneutics (2009a:23-58). He divides the history of biblical hermeneutics into four main epochs, i.e. The Early Church and the Middle Ages; the Reformation and its consequences; the Enlightenment and the emergence of the historical critical approach; and finally, the period of postmodern hermeneutics (2009a:23). He tracks these developments from the early church with its movement from a mainly Jewish cultural context into the cultural context of the Hellenistic world (Homer, Philo, Origen, Tertullian, Augustine), to the Reformation with its emphasis on the word as living word - *viva vox* - (Luther); moving on to the Enlightenment and the rise of historical consciousness beginning with the advent of what has become known as historical criticism (Lessing, Schleiermacher, Hegel), the impact of World War 1 and the existential quest for the meaning of life (Barth), through to the lasting legacy of Bultmann with his distinction between “Historie” and “Geschichte” which exposes the inadequacy of a non-engaged form of exegesis, and the developments in the immediate post-Bultmann era (reaction from his own circle of students; Fuchs). Lategan concludes this historical overview with a reference to the “linguistic revolution” (de Saussure) which viewed language as a system of signs where each component receives its value or meaning from its relationship to the other components, structuralism (Jakobson) and literary theory (Betz), as well as reception theory with its focus on the reader (Jauss and Iser) and its consequences.

- it is in essence sense-making with existential consequences (2009a:13). Hermeneutics, then, has to do with what is involved when we interpret New Testament texts.

A need for hermeneutics only arises when the process of understanding is interrupted or threatened. Given the magnitude of the distance between the original sender and the present-day receiver of the biblical text, the need for hermeneutical support becomes inevitable. It is in the light of this hermeneutical need that Lategan can say that biblical texts are by their very nature hermeneutical. As one illustrative example of the “hermeneutical thrust” of the biblical documents Lategan highlights the many hermeneutical strategies contained in Paul’s letters which effects a reinterpretation of Jewish tradition (2009a:14-22)¹⁸⁶.

Lategan (2009a:59) is of the opinion that certain prerequisites exist for the development of an effective biblical hermeneutics. The first is the premise that understanding is possible, namely, the acceptance of the “communicative potential” (2009a:59) of the biblical documents. A critical and self-reflective approach (a “hermeneutics of suspicion”)¹⁸⁷ to the biblical text can only be constructive within the wider parameters of “hermeneutics of trust”¹⁸⁸. Secondly, a clear understanding of the nature of the literature and the purpose for which it was produced is needed. Reading the biblical text for aesthetic pleasure or simply treating the biblical text as a historical document “will not unlock the

¹⁸⁶ It should be clear to the reader that, from the exegetical work done in chapter two and chapter three of this study, the text of Phil 3:1-11, as one example among many others, serves the very same hermeneutical purpose for Paul.

¹⁸⁷ For Bowe (2003) a reading of the Bible should always keep track of the limits imposed by the social-historical contexts, the use of language, and the restricted metaphors of religious imagination in every time and place: “Consequently, the Bible reflects the limited cultural norms and conceptual frameworks of its own time, incomplete and restricted as they are by their relevance to specific times and places. In short, this storehouse of images can both form and deform our ideas of God and our understanding of faith” (Bowe 2003:Kindle locations 363-367).

Bowe (2003) continues to suggest an approach to the reading of the biblical text which she refers to as a “hermeneutics of suspicion” (Bowe 2003:Kindle locations 387-389): “‘Hermeneutics of suspicion’ is a phrase used to describe the interpreter’s acknowledgment of ideological and perspectival distortions present, both consciously and unconsciously, in any text. In the field of history, for example, this suspicion takes the form of a recognition that all history is written from the perspective of its ‘winners’ and cannot therefore but distort the loser’s legitimate claims” (Bowe 2003:Kindle locations 535-538).

¹⁸⁸ Sheldrake (1991:172-173), referring to the work of Gadamer, notes that a text has “‘excess of meaning’ beyond the subjective intentions of the author. What the text embodies enters different periods of history in distinctive ways. The text comes alive in the present. The present situation, as experienced by the reader, affects the meaning of a text *and* a text alters the reader’s understanding of the present” (emphasis in original) (Sheldrake 1991:172). At the same time, however, “our interpretation of a text is, to a degree, constrained by the authority retained by the author” (Sheldrake 1991:174). Gadamer refers to this as ‘hermeneutics of consent’ (Sheldrake 1991:174).

Previous and present interpretations of a text should be studied as a part of the hermeneutical process, because interpretation is “not a solitary affair but a collective one” (Sheldrake 1991:175).

full potential of the text” (2009a:59). The third is an acceptance by the exegete of the limits of his or her interpretative activity. The origin and transmission of the text is a “shared activity” (2009a:59) which should be respected in the process of interpretation. Fourthly, the interpreter “should learn to live with the contingent nature of the process” (2009a:59). Communication has a dynamic nature which remains an open-ended affair. Finally, the greatest asset of interpretation is its dynamic nature. This enables the reader to reach “backwards” and “forwards” (2009a:59).

In developing an effective hermeneutical model for the interpretation of written texts, Lategan (2009b:65) clarifies the focus of this model as being on the historical nature of biblical texts, the religious, cultural, and sociological context of their origin, the linguistic medium through which they are transmitted, the theological content and the kerygmatic intent of these texts. This hermeneutical model “should support readings aimed at discovering the communicative thrust and enable the user to continue this thrust in new and different situations” (2009b:65)¹⁸⁹. In theological terms, this approach “aims at mediating between the memory of the community of believers who in the past heard God speak through these texts and the expectation of the present community of believers that He will do so again” (2009b:65).

Lategan (2009b:89) presents a diagram, taking his cue from Hernadi, consisting of all the essential elements involved in the communicative process (see diagram 11)¹⁹⁰. The biggest advantage of this model is that it presents a “holistic picture of the communication process” (2009b:86). The model serves as a map to identify where we are at a given moment in the process and it serves as a checklist to ensure that no important aspects are neglected, because we are dealing with a complex procedure¹⁹¹. The model encourages us to use a variety of methods without losing our direction, and

¹⁸⁹ The exegetical method of choice in this dissertation is the socio-rhetorical criticism of Vernon K. Robbins. Robbins describes the focus of socio-rhetorical criticism as a focus on “language about God and Christ, subjectivity in the context of both private and public religious practice and speech, and politics both among and within different religious groups and between and among religious people and various kinds of historical, social, cultural and ideological phenomena in the world they inhabit” (1996b:11).

¹⁹⁰ Common to all communication models are six basic elements, namely, sender, receiver, context, message, contact and code (Du Toit 2009:111).

¹⁹¹ There are three main sectors in the communication process (Lategan 2009b:82-85). The first is the relationship between the sender and the message. The second sector is the message itself, whilst the third sector deals with the

it also provides a “critical framework to assess the suitability of a specific approach for a specific task” (2009b:86). The model provides the space and the freedom to focus on only one aspect, while also affording the reader to explore even deeper without losing sight of the whole. The model is a static representation of a reflection in abstract terms on a meta-level on a dynamic process. The model is, therefore, always open to replacement, correction or adjustment. Hermeneutical reflection remains an unfinished task with new insights to be expected at any given moment (2009b:86).

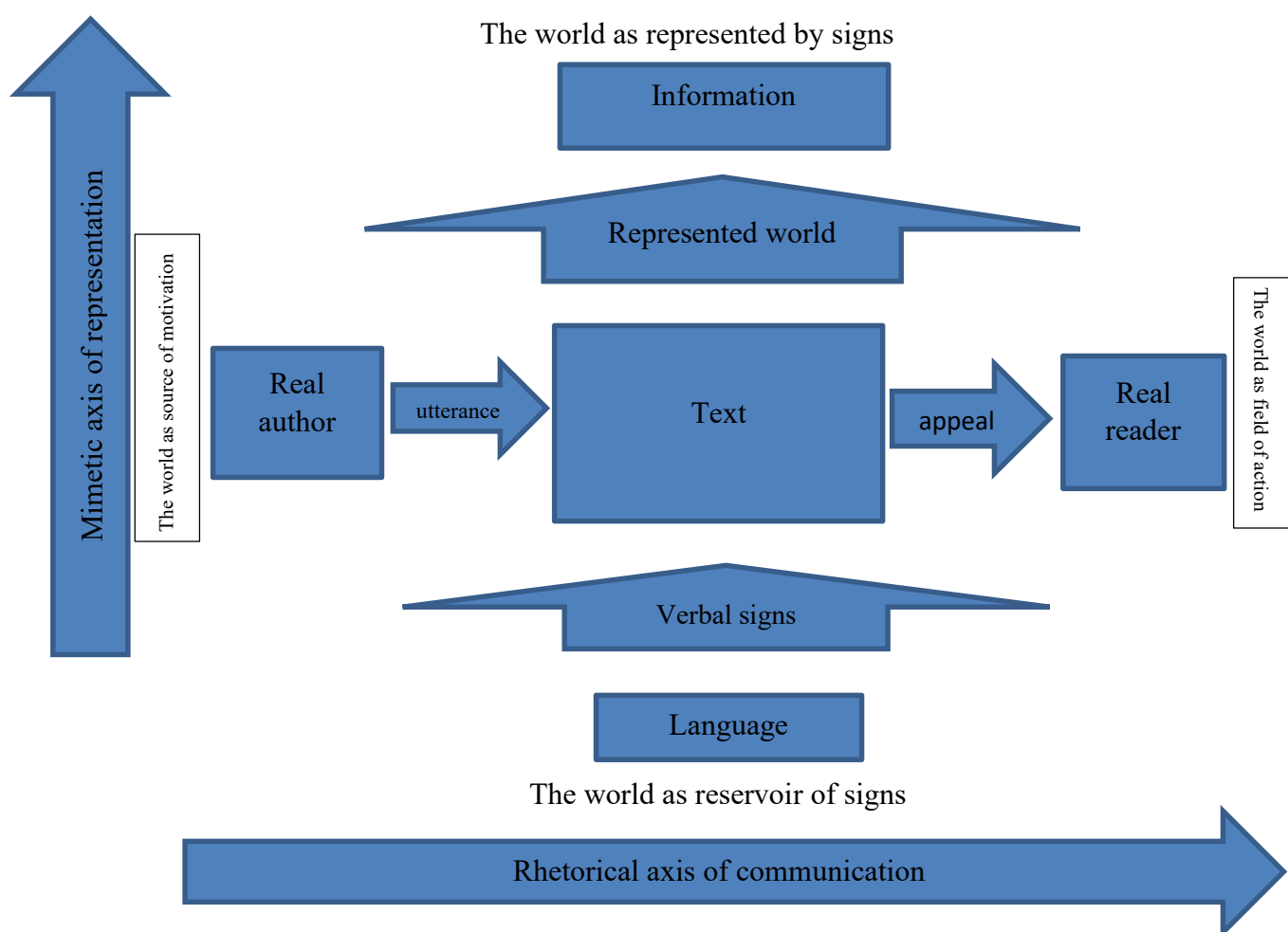


Diagram 11¹⁹²

relationship between the message and the receiver. The first sector deals with origin and text production. The second sector deals with text preservation and mediation, and the third sector with reception and implementation (Lategan 2009b:83).

¹⁹² Perrin (2007:205) calls for a hermeneutical interpretation of the text noting that such an approach to textual interpretation:

1. “Allows a text to speak in different times and places;
2. Uses numerous analytical techniques ... to open up the text;

The mimetic axis of representation shows the different operations that is involved in the construction of the “world of the text” (Lategan 2009b:86-87)¹⁹³. These operations are synchronic relations. Every sentence that we formulate forms part of a certain universe. A collection of sentences makes this universe even clearer. From the reservoir of signs that are available to us, a selection based on our needs is made and we combine them to form a more comprehensive whole. In the case of texts, we use the medium of linguistic signs placed in a certain configuration. An infinite number of configurations are possible from the reservoir of signs available to us. When dealing with the text, the focus is not on the “outside world” (2009b:87). Even when we try to accurately imitate outside reality with our description, the created text is not identical to outside reality but an entity on its own. The hermeneutical task therefore is to understand the world of the text as well as possible. The difference between the real world and the world of the text presents a “shifting opportunity” (2009b:88), since it proposes a “different way of looking at reality” or a “different way of imagining the future” (2009b:88). Of special significance in this instance, is that a reconstruction of the world of the text is dependent on a prior reading of the text. The reconstruction of the text is, then, influenced by the world, the preconceptions and presuppositions of the reader.

The rhetorical axis of communication brings us closer to the communicative thrust of the text (Lategan 2009b:88-89). This axis depicts the interaction between the author and the reader¹⁹⁴. In the case of textual communication, distancing takes place. The first step away from the author is the text

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3. Acknowledges that interpretation always takes place in particular circumstances ... that have an impact on the meaning of a text;
 4. Values the personal life story as one of the factors that the reader brings to the text in order to tease out current meaning;
 5. Goes beyond a search for facts or objective information (knowledge) that the author wanted to convey to the reader;
 6. Acknowledges that texts only make sense in the context of a life; they are meaningful only inasmuch as they assist the reader, and the reading community, to encounter the text as a dynamic, transformative event.”

I find Lategan’s model to be more comprehensive and detailed than the model which Perrin uses.

¹⁹³ “The (static) structure of the text represents a temporary pause - a pause that can be extremely important for developing an in-depth understanding of the implied author, the implied reader and the communicative thrust of the text. But the process of communication goes on inexorably ... the mere reading of ‘the text’ has to be supplemented by reading ‘behind’ and especially by reading ‘in front of’ the text. This is the reason why Ricoeur insists on a transition from semiotics to semantics” (Lategan 2009b:98).

¹⁹⁴ “The aspiring exegete will do well to develop a historical consciousness and to gain insight both in history as a social phenomenon and historiography as the way this history is recorded and interpreted. But dealing with the historical dimension cannot be done in isolation from the other dimensions of the text” (Lategan 2009b:95).

itself. The real author is no longer present. There only remains traces of the author in the text and these traces provide clues to construct the implied author.

This distancing also applies to the intended reader of the text. The text anticipates a certain reader and this reader is someone who must know the code and the language in which the text is written. It must also be someone who understands the allusions and references in a text, who shares its basic assumptions, and who will draw the conclusions and act on the author's suggestions¹⁹⁵. From this a picture of the implied reader can be formed. The author, in most cases, does not know the implied reader since the implied reader is a textual construct. The author can no longer control what the real reader does with the text, but the author can only make an appeal to the real reader via the text. The real reader has to reach back via the reading instructions contained in the text and the reconstruction of the implied reader of the text, in order to grasp the intention of the real author. This enables the reader to develop a conception of the implied author and of the communicative appeal of the text. If the communication is successful, the real reader may then decide to act on the suggestion made by the text (Lategan 2009b:88-89).

It is important to keep two further aspects of the communicative dynamic in mind. First, the actual reading process is an interactive process that takes place between the real reader and the text. Since the real author is no longer involved, the interaction takes place between the real reader and the implied author. Secondly, reading is an iterative process for the individual reader, as well as for all the different readers. The history of reading of a biblical text stretches over many centuries and over many generations. Account of these readings over time has to be given¹⁹⁶. Different readings and differences in terms of the construction of the world of the text makes reading with others essential.

¹⁹⁵ "The reading of a written text comprises a continuous dialogical negotiation for meaning between the text and the reader. Such a negotiation evokes different 'lived experiences'. According to Iser (1978:107), a text is a 'structured prefigurement'. The way in which texts are received and interpreted depends both on who the reader is and on the kind of text (genre) that he or she is reading. Reading certainly does not comprise a one-way process but an active interaction and negotiation between text and reader (cf. Iser 1978:107)" (van der Merwe 2015:3).

¹⁹⁶ Lategan (2009b:81-82) refers to this dynamic as the "hermeneutical circle": "The ongoing cyclic process of pre-understanding - challenge - rejection or acceptance - adjustment - new self-understanding - new pre-understanding is what is understood as the 'hermeneutical circle'."

We enter the process of interpretation midstream and we “cannot be satisfied with idiosyncratic readings” (Lategan 2009b:91). We must be open to new possibilities, because our own reading can never be the final reading (2009b:90-91).

It should be clear, then, that there are at least three possible perspectives from which to approach a biblical text, namely, the historical, the structural and the pragmatic dimensions of the text (Lategan 2009b:103). Effective hermeneutics must be able to account for all three of these in both theory and practice.

Such hermeneutical considerations establish the framework as well as point of departure for the result of our exegetical analysis of Phil 3:1-11 that was done by means of socio-rhetorical criticism. Following this short overview of the dynamics involved in the hermeneutical process, the primary focus in this chapter is to discuss the ways in which the exegetical findings of 3:1-11 are relevant for Christian spirituality, namely, how the exegetical insights from 3:1-11 (gained from the socio-rhetorical criticism which was done in chapter two and chapter three) can be hermeneutically brought into dialogue with the study of Christian spirituality. However, another, equally brief exploration of the definition of Christian spirituality, as well as the dynamics involved in the study of Christian spirituality, must first precede my exploration of the relevance of the exegetical work in 3:1-11 for Christian spirituality.

3. Spirituality: definition and characteristics

The breadth and the power of the spirituality phenomenon has a grip on the contemporary imagination (Waaïjman 2002:2). Both religious and non-religious people are grappling with the deepest yearnings in the human heart, a desire for the sacred (Downey 1997:Kindle locations 148 of 1870). McGrath (1999:Kindle locations 746) says: “The growing recognition of the importance of

the interior world of personal experience has resulted in considerable interest in the concept of spirituality.”

Kourie argues that spirituality, which she defines as “post-patriarchal and telluric” (2009:148), is reclaiming its position in society and in the academy. She believes that spirituality will contribute to a “global transformation of consciousness” (2009:170) and that the University has a role to play in this endeavour. The study of spirituality has transformative potential: as a new and vibrant discipline spirituality would help to liberate theology and effect transformation at a personal and societal level (2009:167-170).

In the same article, Kourie (2009:152) emphasizes certain dynamics of the phenomenon of postmodernism as one of the reasons for an increased interest in spirituality. In following Griffith (1988 & 1990) she holds that postmodernism can either be classified as deconstructive, or as constructive. Deconstructive postmodernism, on the one hand, overcomes the modern world-view by an “anti-world-view” (2009:152) which leads to relativism and nihilism. Constructive postmodernism, on the other hand, creates “a new unity of scientific, ethical, aesthetic, and religious intuitions ... support for the ecology, peace, feminist, and other emancipatory movements of our time” (2009:152). The human person is internally constituted by a whole range of relationships, and the character of human consciousness is ambiguous and multifaceted. This leads to a desire to find meaning and connectedness in the midst of fragmentation. Constructive postmodernism, then, has immense value for present-day spirituality, specifically in its emphasis on the interconnectedness of all of life, whether human or non-human. Postmodernism, in light of this need for meaning and connectedness, is open to the “mystical, the spiritual, and the aesthetic” (2009:152).

So much for the reasons behind the considerable interest in spirituality. But what exactly is meant by the term “spirituality”? Are there certain key characteristics which can assist us in coming to a working definition of the term? If so, is it possible to present a cohesive and concise definition

of the term? Finally, how can a specifically Christian spirituality be defined? These questions guide our investigation in the following section.

3.1. Defining spirituality

Any attempt to define spirituality appears to be a futile attempt (Peterson 2005:767). Sheldrake (1991:33) indicates that a part of the problem with defining spirituality has to do with the fact that it is not a single, transcultural phenomenon but is rooted within the lived experience of God's presence in history and a history which is always specific. Kourie holds that definitions of spirituality abound, ranging from the "deeply creative" to the "distinctively bizarre" (2009:151). Despite these many challenges involved in defining spirituality, I present some key characteristics of Christian spirituality¹⁹⁷. As I indicated in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, spirituality can be defined as an experience - whether religious, mystical, or spiritual. I will present a brief historic overview of the use of the term spirituality, together with some defining characteristics of Christian spirituality from the work of certain leading scholars in the academic field of Christian spirituality. My aim in this section is by no means to create an in-depth or complete representation of the field of Christian spirituality. The brief investigation of Christian spirituality presented here, merely aims to create a platform from which a fruitful dialogue between Christian spirituality and the exegetical findings from Phil 3:1-11 can be held.

Celia Kourie (2009:155-156) provides a good historic overview of the term 'spirituality'. The word "spirituality" is derived from the Latin *spiritualitas*. *Spiritualitas* is related to *spiritus* and *spiritualis* which translates *pneuma* and *pneumatikos* in Paul's writings. Paul, in turn, made use of the Old Testament role of the spirit (*ruah*) of God. An interpretation of spirituality as described in the Pauline sense, was the predominant usage throughout the early centuries of the church. The twelfth century saw a change in the use of the term 'spirituality': "spirituality was seen in *opposition* to the

¹⁹⁷ For a more detailed list of definitions of spirituality, see Appendix A.

corporeal or material” (emphasis in original) (2009:155). During the thirteenth century a juridical sense of “spirituality” developed “as that pertaining to the clerical state” (2009:155). The clerical usage was the primary usage until the sixteenth century. The seventeenth century saw the reappearance of spirituality in its religious form. In France, “spiritualité”, referred to the “devout life, expressing a personal, meaningful and affective relationship with God” (2009:156). The term received negative connotations, and, as a consequence, diverse terminologies appeared in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to describe this phenomenon, namely, “devotion”, “perfection”, and “piety” (2009:156). The Roman Catholics rarely used the term during the eighteenth century, whilst the nineteenth century spirituality referred primarily to “free religious groups not affiliated to mainline churches” (2009:156). In the twentieth century spirituality re-appeared as a comprehensive term concerning the fullness of Christian experience, and such an understanding of the term is still in use in the twenty-first century. Christian spirituality does not disengage itself from earthly endeavours, but it “fully embraces the phenomenal world” (2009:170).

Apart from definition, the term spirituality is used also with a wide range of meaning attached to it - from practices of prayer and devotion to practices with the occult. Quite a few trends characterize the modern interest in spirituality, namely, New Age spirituality, an increased appreciation of the importance of psychological insights in the spiritual quest, a turn to the East for inspiration and practical guidance, a deep appreciation for the sacredness of the earth, the proliferation of various self-help movements and, finally, the emergence of feminist spirituality and likewise masculine spirituality (Downey 1997:Kindle locations 62-124).

For Michael Downey two strands appear to be running through any approach to spirituality. The first is the awareness that certain levels of reality are not immediately apparent. The second is the quest for personal integration in the face of forces of fragmentation and depersonalization (1997:Kindle locations 155).

Downey defines spirituality of whatever kind as, “a ‘progressive, consciously pursued, personal integration through self-transcendence within and toward the horizon of ultimate concern’” (Downey 1997:Kindle locations 163). The relational component between the human and that which is of ultimate concern is highlighted in this definition from Downey.

According to McGrath (1999:Kindle locations 746-750), it is of considerable importance to investigate the way in which Christian ideas impact upon spirituality¹⁹⁸. Guinan differentiates between three different levels of Christian spirituality: nature (the one common Christian spirituality), culture (the concrete modifications of it in space and time) and person (the unique spirituality of the individual). In light of this he warns against the dangers of spiritual ethnocentrism (thinking our spirituality is the spirituality), spiritual chauvinism (our form of spirituality is better than yours), cultures tending to swallow up persons, and being too eager to easily give away the unique spirituality we are called to realize. Even though there are many different incarnations of Christian spirituality, it is of the essence to remember that none of these incarnations can function independently or autonomously. Christian spirituality is at the deepest level communal and must, therefore, always pass through the scrutiny of a life together, namely, the theology, traditions and experiences of the larger Christian community throughout the ages. To be human is to be interrelated. The biblical view of human existence is wholistic, participatory, and dynamic (Guinan 1994:7-10&16-17).

A defining characteristic of Christian spirituality is that it is a biblical spirituality. Our “lived faith experience ... draws on the special biblical treasure-house of stories, images, prophetic challenges, and prayers and on the ultimate example of the life and death of Jesus for its understanding of God and for its convictions about the meaning of human existence” (Bowe 2003:Kindle locations 493-504)¹⁹⁹.

¹⁹⁸ For a more detailed list of definitions of Christian spirituality, see Appendix B.

¹⁹⁹ “A third way of distinguishing different types of spirituality concerns the ways in which various spiritual traditions view the world. We have already noted the tendency in apophatic spirituality to turn away from the world outside of the self to an inner world of silence, darkness, and negation of images. Here the movement is a movement within to embrace a unitive love in the stillness of the presence of God. Apostolic spiritualities, by contrast, turn toward

Kees Waaijman confirms the relational character of spirituality when he refers to spirituality as our “relation to the Absolute” (2002:1). Summing up what spirituality is about Waaijman (2006a:13-14) indicates the following elements. Firstly, a relational process between God and man. The process can be viewed from two standpoints, namely, the divine pole (God communicates himself) and the human pole (humans prepare themselves in various ways for union with God and growing to perfection in God). This relational process is layered: “the whole of human experience is ... involved in it” (2006a:15). This relational process is also mediated, that is, taking human beings in the direction of God, namely, forms of knowing, willing, acting, etc. and bringing God in the direction of man, namely, Scripture, sacraments, the neighbour, etc.

The character of this relationship can be described as a gradual process of transformation. In this process of transformation Waaijman (2006b:42) distinguishes five layers: from non-being into being - the creation by God; from being deformed to being re-formed - re-creation by God; being conformed to a divine-human transformation model which introduces a person into divine reality; transformation in love - the soul is led into God whilst God takes up his abode in the soul; transformation in glory which awaits us after this life (transformation in love already contains a sketch of this).

Kourie (2009:167) highlights the transformative character of Christian spirituality by describing this as “a mystical transformation in Christ, a *Christification*” (emphasis in original) which is the possibility of an “essentially dynamic union with the Risen Jesus” (2009:167). A Christification, in turn, leads to “deification” or “*theosis*”, which is an invitation to become sharers in the divine

the outside world as the sacred locus of God’s presence and the object of God’s saving love” (Bowe 2003:Kindle locations 480-484).

Confirming this very helpful paradigm (of apophatic/contemplative and kataphatic/apostolic movements in Christian spirituality) Nouwen (2010:Kindle locations 2012-2017) beautifully sums up the importance of living inward, as well as outward and keeping them close together: “Spiritual formation, to use the words of Elizabeth O’Connor, requires both a journey inward and a journey outward. The journey inward is the journey to find the Christ dwelling within us. The journey outward is the journey to find the Christ dwelling among us and in the world. The journey inward calls for the disciplines of solitude, silence, prayer, meditation, contemplation, and attentiveness to the movements of our heart. The journey outward in community and mission calls for the disciplines of care, compassion, witness, outreach, healing, accountability, and attentiveness to the movement of other people’s hearts. These two journeys belong together to strengthen each other and should never be separated.”

nature (emphasis in original) (2009:168). A Christification also encompasses living the very life of Christ in the Holy Spirit. This effects complete transformation (2009:168).

For Schneiders the content of a specifically Christian spirituality is the triune God as revealed in Jesus Christ and the project is living in the Church community by the gift of the Holy Spirit. This belief in and experience of the trinity informs and transforms the way in which a person views and engages with reality (Schneiders 1998:40). Schneiders, along with Waaijman and Kourie, confirms the relational and transformative character of Christian spirituality.

Bowe emphasizes the nature of Christian spirituality as a way of life lived in response to the divine spirit. Spirituality describes our dynamic human appreciation of the mystery of God revealed and known. Bowe also affirms the eschatological nature of Christian spirituality, namely, God's reign has already broken into our world, but the fulfilment of this reign only lies in the future. Christian spirituality is defined by an already-not-yet dynamic (Bowe 2003:Kindle locations 3569-3622)²⁰⁰.

Philip Sheldrake (2007:38-39) gives an in-depth description of Christian spirituality by indicating seven points²⁰¹ which he believes characterizes the concept. Firstly, it is intimately related to a specific understanding of God and of God's relationship to the world and humanity: "God is understood to be a dynamic interrelationship of 'persons in communion' (Trinity)" (2007:38). Secondly, God overflows into an outgoing dynamic of creativity. Christian spirituality is creation-centred. Thirdly, God engages with humanity particularly in the person of Jesus Christ (Incarnation). Christian spirituality involves conversion and practising a way of life in the pattern of Jesus Christ (discipleship). Fourthly, Christian spirituality has a positive view of the material world and the body (sacramental), namely, the material world is the place where God reveals himself and where human beings have sacred encounters. Fifthly, "a Christian understanding of God's creativity and

²⁰⁰ Christian spirituality is, therefore, also eschatological spirituality. God's reign and kingdom has already been achieved and set in motion through the life, death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. This process will only be completed, however, sometime in the future. Ours is a spirituality of hope. A hope and trust in the ever-continuing victory of God, as well as our participation in His victory.

²⁰¹ See also Sheldrake (1991:52-53).

relationship to humanity is not naively optimistic” (2007:39). The material world is characterised by sin and disorder and the Christian disciple is therefore called to conversion and following in the way of Jesus Christ. As a sixth point, this following is not individualistic but essentially communal, “within the community of believers, sustained by a common life, shared rituals and expressed ideally in mutual love and acceptance. In fact, the heart of Christian spirituality is precisely a way of life rather than an abstract code of a priori beliefs” (2007:39)²⁰². The seventh point confirms that God is present in this community, as well as individually in each person through his Spirit “empowering, guiding, and inspiring the journey of the community and of each person towards an ultimate union with the divine in eternal life” (2007:39).

From this brief investigation the following characteristics of Christian spirituality can be presented. First, Christian spirituality is a biblical spirituality. The lived experience of faith draws on the biblical story for its understanding of God and for its views on that which is of ultimate concern. Second, Christian spirituality is relational. The relationship is defined in terms of the relation between the triune God and a human being. The relationship is also defined in terms of the relation between human beings, and between human beings and physical creation. Third, Christian spirituality is transformational. The gradual process of transformation is initiated by the relation between the triune God and a human being. This transformation is “made effective through love and vivified by the Holy Spirit, to God’s self-manifestation in Christ” (Grech 2011:Kindle locations 14). This gradual process of transformation can be described as a way of life lived in the pattern of Jesus Christ in community and to the benefit of the community. Fourth, Christian spirituality, as a gradual process of transformation in relationship, has an eschatological character. Christian spirituality, as a life lived in response to and in the power of the divine spirit, is already possible in the present, but the fulfillment of this gradual process of transformation will only become a reality in the future.

In the following section some of the modern characteristics of spirituality will be investigated.

²⁰²

See also Sheldrake (1987:91).

3.2. Modern characteristics of spirituality

The current interest in spirituality can be characterized in terms of its movement away from outer-directed authority, namely, inherited religious and social identities or value-systems, to inner-directed experience which is seen as more authentic (Sheldrake 2013:5). As I indicated in my problem statement in chapter one, a limited and irresponsible use of the biblical text when assessing any type of religious experience inevitably leads to neurosis, selfishness, can become pretentious, and even turn violent.

Spirituality, according to Kourie, is not necessarily connected to religion. In fact, from spirituality's side, there seems to exist a certain "allergy" (2009:153) towards religious and ecclesiastical institutions. Kourie lists five reasons for this allergic reaction. Firstly, a fanatical intolerance among some religious groups. Secondly, autocratic systems of religious governance. Third, the Bible is used as "law" and not as nourishing, sustaining, and life-giving source. Fourthly, women are treated as second-class citizens in many religious groups. Finally, hierarchical divisions that leads to elitism are unacceptable to twenty-first century men and women (2009:152-153).

Even though established religious traditions are not very appealing to a large number of people, Kourie believes that religion and spirituality can be "partners" (2009:153). Religion can be renewed by spirituality, whilst religion can provide spirituality with a rudder and prevent it from becoming isolated (2009:153). Schneiders (2003:171) likens the complete rejection of religion to curing a headache by decapitation.

Da Silva believes that there are two contemporary trends which challenge Christianity, and also pose questions to Christian spirituality. The first trend is an internal trend, namely, the pressure on Christianity to adopt new theological interpretations. Those who are members of a Christian community are, at the same time, members of society. These members continually experience the

pressure towards cultural change²⁰³. According to da Silva (2017:408), these “internal ecclesiastical trends are challenging the essence of Christianity”. “Profound alterations” in areas such as church worship and individual Christian ethos and lifestyle indicate how Christianity is changing globally (2017:408-410)²⁰⁴.

The second trend is an external trend, namely, “a radical question related to the needs of the world which require ethics, morals and conscience” (da Silva 2017:408). The relevance of Christianity’s response to the needs of the world can be found in aspects such as the alleviation of poverty, the provision for basic needs, as well as leadership “towards the moderation and resolution of conflicting situations” (2017:408). “Christianity is supposed to be a source for applied morals which requires the active intervention of morals” (2017:414). The human conscience is shaped by teaching God’s voice from a biblical perspective (2017:414).

I suggest that the exegetical findings of Phil 3:1-11 can engage with both of these trends in at least two ways. First, the pressure Christianity is experiencing to adopt new forms of interpretation - which seems to be heavily influenced by culture - can be released by applying Paul’s criticism in 3:1-11 of an identity primarily based on one’s ethnicity or achievements. “Does Paul erase ethnic identity?” (Barclay 2020:311) through his criticism in 3:1-11? “Paul embraces, as an alternative source of worth, his new identification with Christ, which does not erase his previous forms of identity, but subordinates, reorders, and realigns them” (2020:312). Phil 3:1-11 functions, therefore, as an example of the “irreducibly theological and Christological nature” (2020:302) of Paul’s

²⁰³ Ngalula (2017:233-234) describes four approaches from different denominations in Africa to the African cultures inherited from their ancestors. Of relevance for our analysis is the second approach to culture which Ngalula mentions, namely, “making the past and present heritage of Africa key to interpreting the Bible and Christian doctrine” (2017:233). African initiated churches follow this approach specifically. Even though the Bible and the themes of Christian doctrine and practice are accepted, the content is given an “African” interpretation (2017:234).

²⁰⁴ An African example of this is the approach of African revivalist churches. African revivalist churches are the name given to denominations “that marked the dynamism of African Christianity in an original way from the end of the 19th century” (Ngalula 2017:230). There are two types of African revivalist churches, namely, African initiated churches and African Pentecostal churches. African initiated churches are new religious movements - founded by Africans, for Africans, in Africa - who call themselves Christian. They officially distance themselves from churches that were established by Western missionary activities. They function independently, both institutionally and doctrinally, from “imported” Christianity from the West into Africa. They express their doctrinal independence “through the fact that the dignity of Blacks and their liberation are the two essential keys for interpreting the entire Bible and the history of salvation” (2017:230-231).

distancing from human systems of valuation. In other words, Paul's questioning of social norms is grounded in the event of Christ crucified (2020:302), and, in light of 3:1-11, I would add: of Christ resurrected.

Second, the pressure Christianity is experiencing to provide aid and support in terms of the needs of the world, can be released by the shaping of the human conscience from the perspective of Phil 3:1-11. Paul encourages the Philippian Jesus-followers to live a life based on the contours and content which was set forth in the example of Jesus in 2:6-11. In 3:1-11 Paul uses his own past, present and future as a further example of what such a life might look like: "Throughout this chapter there are interesting echoes of the language of 2:5-11, suggesting that Paul saw his own Christian discipleship as conformity to the pattern of Christ's self-emptying and exaltation, which had brought glory to God" (Hooker in Dunn 2003b:110).

In the final section of this chapter I will attempt to indicate the relevance of Phil 3:1-11 for Christian spirituality. A few questions will guide my approach: what are the key aspects of Christian spirituality which can be gathered from Paul's deep and thick description in 3:1-11? Is it possible for these insights into Paul's spirituality, as presented in 3:1-11, to make a contribution to the current discussion on spirituality? What contributions does Paul's spirituality in 3:1-11 make to this discussion? How does Paul's spirituality in 3:1-11 influence the current discussion on spirituality? I will now attempt to answer these questions.

4. The relevance of Phil 3:1-11 for Christian spirituality

With the focus of this chapter on the ways in which the biblical text functions as the privileged text of Christian spirituality, we can now turn to the question of how to use Phil 3:1-11 in Christian spirituality. John Barclay (2020:300) believes that, for Paul to remain a constructive challenge, a "creative theological hermeneutic, which attempts to recontextualise Paul's core insights in our own very different historical, intellectual, and social setting" needs to be self-consciously deployed.

According to Perrin (2007:38) theology and spirituality have a “dialectical relationship: each is able to contribute to the other.” In the first two sections of this chapter, I have presented an exploration of the dynamics involved in the interpretation of a biblical text, namely, hermeneutics, as well as a definition of spirituality and some of the modern characteristics of spirituality.

In the final section of this chapter I now present the relevance of Paul’s compact and significant insights in Phil 3:1-11 for Christian spirituality. The section is divided into two parts. First, I present the implications for Christian spirituality of the exegetical work which was done on 3:1-11. I am of the opinion that the traditional theological categories of justification, adoption, and sanctification could serve as useful and valuable categories for the discussion of the implications of 3:1-11 for Christian spirituality. The primary question here is: what are the key aspects of Christian spirituality which can be gathered from Paul’s deep and thick description in 3:1-11? Second, I present the practical significance of the exegetical work which was done on 3:1-11 for the current discussion on Christian spirituality. The following questions will guide our investigation here: is it possible for these insights into Paul’s spirituality, as presented in 3:1-11, to make a contribution to the current discussion on Christian spirituality? What contributions does Paul’s spirituality in 3:1-11 make to this discussion? How does Paul’s spirituality in 3:1-11 influence the current discussion on Christian spirituality?²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ In the section on hermeneutics in this chapter, I indicated that Lategan (2009a:59) is of the opinion that five prerequisites exist for the development of an effective biblical hermeneutics. The first is the premise that understanding is possible. The second is that a clear understanding of the nature of the literature and the purpose for which it was produced is needed. The third is an acceptance by the exegete of the limits of his or her interpretative activity. The fourth is that the interpreter “should learn to live with the contingent nature of the process” (2009a:59). Communication has a dynamic nature which remains an open-ended affair. Finally, the greatest asset of interpretation is its dynamic nature. This enables the reader to reach “backwards” and “forwards” (2009a:59). These five prerequisites will serve as a framework for the hermeneutical appropriation of the exegetical work which was done in chapter two and chapter three.

4.1. Justification, adoption, and sanctification

An understanding of the biblical text is possible, without claiming exclusive or ultimate rights for a particular reading. A detailed exegetical analysis was done in chapter two and chapter three to come to a better understanding of the nature of Phil 3:1-11 and the purpose for which it was produced. The limits of my interpretive activity, together with the contingent and dynamic nature of the exegetical process, ensures that the findings presented here is by no means a complete representation of the hermeneutical thrust of 3:1-11. I do suggest, however, that the findings presented here can be usefully and valuably added to the ongoing discussion on Christian spirituality.

In the hypothesis section of chapter one I argued the importance of an understanding of the process of transformation as an integral part of the nature of Christian spirituality - especially as it presented by Paul in Phil 3:1-11. I presented five questions from Sheldrake (2013:40-41) which can serve as a valuable guide in coming to a better understanding of the process of transformation. Those five questions were:

- 1) What needs to be transformed?
- 2) What factors stand in the way of transformation?
- 3) Where does transformation take place?
- 4) How does transformation take place?
- 5) What is the purpose of transformation?

I will use these five questions now also as a framework to summarise the investigation of the dialogue between the exegetical insights from Phil 3:1-11 and Christian spirituality at the end of this section.

I am of the opinion that the traditional theological categories of justification, adoption, and sanctification can be usefully appropriated for the interpretation of Phil 3:1-11. For Paul it is exactly because the Jesus-followers in Philippi have been justified by their faithfulness, loyalty, and trust in

Jesus, and adopted into the family of God that they are now able to live sanctified and transformed lives in the example set by Christ (which Paul poetically presented in 2:6-11). Paul's spirituality in 3:1-11, "moves from the indicative (who we are) to the imperative (what we are to do)" (Stevens & Green 2003:xiv).

Such an understanding links up with what other theology scholars have argued before. First, Grudem (1994:722) says, "a right understanding of justification is absolutely crucial to the whole Christian faith." Grudem (1994:723) then describes justification as, "*an instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight*" (emphasis in original). Christ Jesus justifies believers in order for them to be able to stand before God as righteous people (Fitzmyer 1993:12). The Creator God reveals himself as the Father, the Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Venter (2015:3) says, "all Christian spirituality is inherently Trinitarian spirituality: the relationship with God was initiated by the Father through the work of Jesus Christ, and it becomes effective in the Spirit."

An analysis of the sensory-aesthetic texture in chapter two suggested that suprahuman powers, cultural power, and human sinfulness - all of which create relational dysfunction between God and human beings, as well as between human beings themselves - are three aspects which highlight what is wrong with God's world according to Paul. In the investigation of the argumentative texture of Phil 3:1-11, the situation in Philippi which led to the construction of the letter was presented on three levels as suggested above: 1) relational dysfunction on a leadership level; 2) pressure from opposing Jewish teachers; 3) hostility from surrounding gentiles. The challenges facing the Jesus-followers in Philippi were, I suggest, the results of the three dysfunctional forms of power referred to in the exploration of the sensory-aesthetic texture of 3:1-11.

An investigation of the repetitive texture of Phil 3:1-11 in chapter two suggested that Jesus, as Christ and Lord, is the primary subject of Paul's autobiographical sketch. Paul emphasizes the identity of Jesus in 3:1-11, he is God's anointed Messiah-King and the true Ruler of the whole world.

Paul also presents a specific understanding of the law, namely, ethnocentric covenantalism in 3:1-11. By means of terminology from financial accounting Paul states that ethnocentric covenantalism is “loss” (3:7&8) and that Jesus is “gain” (3:7&8). The analysis of the progressive texture in chapter two suggested that Paul, even though he presents his ethnocentric covenantal past as perfect (3:4b-6), warned the Jesus-followers in Philippi of the dangers posed by the Judaizing opponents (3:2) who preached a message largely in line with Paul’s past beliefs. Paul also confirms that he considers everything as excrement that he may gain Christ (3:8). The main point of disagreement between Paul and these opponents, I suggest, is their incessant insistence on proselyte circumcision for gentile Jesus-followers to become a part of God’s covenantal family. Proselyte circumcision, according to Paul, is not a necessity for being adopted into God’s covenantal family. Christ-centric covenantalism (3:9) is what is needed, through service to God and others in the Spirit, without boasting in the flesh (3:3).

Paul’s main teaching on justification is elaborated in Phil 3:7–11, with its theme “righteousness by faithfulness”. The main lineaments are displayed both negatively, by renouncing “confidence in the flesh” (3:3) and abandoning a striving for “righteousness based on law” (3:9), and positively, by embracing confidence in Christ (3:3) and receiving the righteousness from (ἐκ) God and through (διὰ) faithfulness, with “faithfulness” (whether personal or Christ’s faithfulness) as the ground (ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει). The complement is sanctification, a calling to be holy.

Second, adoption is an “act of God whereby he makes us members of his family” (Grudem 1994:736). In Phil 3:1-11 Paul addresses the Philippian Jesus-followers as ἀδελφοί μου, “my family” (3:1). This form of address emphasises the familial relationship between the Jesus-followers in Philippi. Christ Jesus reconciled us with the Father, namely, Jesus changed our relationship with the Father from being one of enmity and hostility to one characterized by friendship and intimacy (Fitzmyer 1993:12-13). Christian spirituality is always located within a specific ecclesial theological tradition and community (Haight 2014:166). Spiritual formation is formation in community - without community spirituality becomes egocentric and individualistic. In the investigation of the ideological

texture of 3:1-11 in chapter three it was suggested that, because of God's action in Jesus, God restored humanity. The Philippian Jesus-followers can rejoice in the Lord because they are part of God's covenantal family.

Third, sanctification is a "progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives" (Grudem 1994:746). Sanctification implies that Christ Jesus has marked us off for worship and praise to the heavenly Father. Christ Jesus gradually reshapes believers so that we 'are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory' (2 Cor 3:18) (NIV) (Fitzmyer 1993:14). This transformation is intertwined with mission. Richard Rohr (2011:154) strikingly notes: "that seems to be the great difference between transformed and non-transformed people. Great people come to serve, not to be served." Grudem (1994:750) describes sanctification as a process in three stages. Firstly, sanctification begins at conversion. Secondly, sanctification should increase throughout the life of a Jesus-follower. Thirdly, sanctification will be made perfect at death. Eschatology and salvation history are present in Phil 3:1-11. In eschatology history moves towards the time of "last things" (Robbins 1996a:123). Eschatology is "the study of the End (eschaton)" (Stevens 2003:177). Eschatology reminds us of the already-not-yet character of Christian existence: "Paul ... emphasized the proleptic and preliminary eschatological character of Christian existence. The interim is not yet the time of fulfilment. The eschaton is still to come, and a faithful existence is the only way to be prepared for it ... In our new allegiance to Christ, we enjoy an existence of freedom from the law but without libertinism" (Schwarz 2000:95).

In salvation history God's plan for humans is worked out through a complicated but ever-ongoing process which moves slowly towards God's goals (Robbins 1996a:123-124). Paul gives a vivid description of salvation-history culminating in the resurrection of Jesus in Phil 3:1-11. He mentions the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus in 3:10: so that I may know Him and be known by Him, and the power of God displayed in his resurrection from the dead, and the participation in his physical and mental suffering, to be inwardly transformed in my nature by dying to myself like Jesus.

An exploration of the ideological texture indicated that Paul's autobiographical sketch in Phil 3:4-11 was presented to the Philippians as an example of the humility and faithfulness of Jesus in 2:6-11. This attitude of humility and faithfulness is expressed in Paul's desire to be transformed, that is, to know the power of the resurrection of Jesus, to share in the suffering of Jesus, and to be conformed to his death (3:10). The telos of Paul's life is described as resurrection from the dead (3:11). An analysis of the opening-middle-closing texture of the slightly truncated section of 3:1-11 suggested that the letter's chief value for theological interpretation may be found in the way in which it portrays a view of what it means to live as a Jesus-follower within a pagan society. Paul describes this suggestion in 1:27 (NIV): "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."

In the section on argumentative texture it was also suggested that Paul presents a theology of martyrdom as strategy for withstanding both the internal and the external pressures facing the Philippian community. This theology of martyrdom finds primary expression in the humility and faithfulness of Jesus as Paul presents it in Phil 2:6-11. Through Paul's presentation of the examples of Timothy (humility in 2:19-24) and Epaphroditus (faithfulness in 2:25-30) the Jesus-followers in Philippi have examples from the lives of fellow Jesus-followers of a theology of martyrdom. This, I believe, is what it means for the Jesus-followers in Philippi to live a life in accordance with 1:27. In 3:1-11 Paul also presents his own life as an example of the humility and faithfulness of Jesus.

In the section on the implications for Christian spirituality of the exegetical work which was done on Phil 3:1-11 in chapter two and chapter three, I presented the ways in which Paul's description in 3:1-11 confirms the traditional theological categories of justification, adoption, and sanctification. The investigation of the ideological texture of 3:1-11 in chapter three indicated that "justification" is the declaration of God, the just judge, that someone is in the right, that their sins are forgiven, and that they are a true member of the covenant family, the people belonging to Abraham. That is how the word works in Paul's writings. It does not describe how people get in to God's forgiven family; it declares that they are in (Wright 2013b:218). Δικαίωω is a declarative word, declaring that

something is the case, rather than a word for making something happen or changing the way something is. This vindication, occurs twice. It occurs in the future on the basis of the entire life a person has led in the power of the Spirit. And it occurs in the present as an anticipation of that future verdict, when someone, responding in believing obedience to the “call” of the gospel, believes that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead (2013:286-287).

The concept of “faithfulness” comes into sharp focus when Paul says in Phil 3:9: ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει, “but that which is through the faithfulness of Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faithfulness”. πίστις can be translated with a semantic range which stretches from loyalty and fidelity, on the one side of the spectrum, to trust, on the other side of the spectrum. Loyalty, fidelity, and trust in the faithfulness of Jesus justifies a person, namely, adopts them into God’s family. Being justified and adopted into God’s family, immediately catalyses a life-long process of sanctification. This process of living a sanctified and transformed life, I suggest, finds specific expression in Paul’s description in 3:1-11 in the form of a spirituality of weakness and vulnerability.

At the start of this section I mentioned the importance of having an understanding of the gradual process of transformation. Is there perhaps a way to measure this transformation? How does a person know whether they are being transformed? Paul Pettit (2008:18-19) asks how a believer can know whether they are becoming more and more like Jesus Christ, namely, that they are being transformed? For Pettit the most basic parameter on spiritual formation must include the idea of life change, namely, that a person is being formed at the core of their being. This is the holistic work of God transforming the individual continually closer to the image and actions of Jesus Christ. Secondly, the idea of other persons forms a foundational underpinning of spiritual formation. For a Christian change does not normally involve change in isolation from others. The change we seek is not solely for self-improvement. “Christians are to be *in process* and undergoing renovation so that the individual believer is able to influence and interact with *others* in a more Christlike manner.

Christians are *in process* for *influence*” (emphasis in original) (2008:19). This transformation is oriented as service toward God and others.

In concluding a brief summarising of my answers to Sheldrake’s five questions renders the following responses. First, what needs to be transformed and what stands in the way of transformation? As far as can be gathered from Phil 3:1-11, a spirituality which relies on the Law for obtaining righteousness stands in the way of transformation. Second, where and how does transformation take place? As far as can be gathered from 3:1-11, transformation takes place in Christ and in community through the power of the Spirit. Third, what is the aim of transformation? As far as can be gathered from 3:1-11, Paul wants to know Christ and Paul wants to be found in Christ, that is, to gain him and to know the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

In the final section of this chapter, I investigate the practical significance of the dialogue between Phil 3:1-11 and Christian spirituality.

4.2. Paul’s spirituality in Phil 3:1-11: A Messiah-shaped spirituality of weakness and vulnerability

In this final section I present the practical significance of the exegetical work which was done on Phil 3:1-11 for the current discussion on Christian spirituality. The following questions will guide our analysis here: is it possible for these insights into Paul’s spirituality, as presented in 3:1-11, to make a contribution to the current discussion on Christian spirituality? What contributions does Paul’s spirituality in 3:1-11 make to this discussion? How does Paul’s spirituality in 3:1-11 influence the current discussion on Christian spirituality?

In chapter one I formulated the problem statement by saying that my assumption here is that many modern approaches to Christian spirituality suffer from either a very limited use of the biblical text as the privileged text of Christian spirituality, or from an irresponsible use of the biblical text in many instances when it is used as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. For a number of reasons, the limited use of the biblical text, as well as the irresponsible use of the biblical text, can be considered problematic. The neglect of the Bible as a spiritual resource lead to, “confusion, error, imbalance, idolatry, lack of spiritual discernment ... seduced away from the worship of Christ” (Adam 2004:20). A limited and irresponsible use of the biblical text when assessing any type of religious experience inevitably leads to neurosis, selfishness, becomes pretentious, and turns violent. I believe that a biblical spirituality can provide rootedness and direction to the current discussion on Christian spirituality. A biblical spirituality can smooth the rough edge of radical individualism which characterizes so many developments in spirituality. These individualistic tendencies tend to breed narcissism. Christian spirituality, rooted in a sense of belonging to a people who together express their sense of the sacred, as pre-eminently mediated through the person of Christ, creates a community of eschatological hope not characterized by an escapist approach which tends to evade or deny the reality of suffering and pain and death, but which views all of reality through the lens of the past and future resurrection from the dead.

My suggestion is, therefore, that the biblical text, as the privileged text of Christian spirituality, should be given a preferential role in order to function as an invaluable source for the assessment of religious experience. I now present two possible ways in which the exegetical findings of Phil 3:1-11 can contribute to the current discussion on Christian spirituality.

As noted above (da Silva 2017:408-414) two contemporary trends (referred to during our analysis of the modern characteristics of spirituality) which are placing pressure on Christianity will serve as a framework for appropriating the exegetical findings of Phil 3:1-11. The first trend is the internal pressure experienced by Christianity to adopt new forms of biblical interpretations in line

with continual cultural change²⁰⁶. The second trend is the external pressure on Christianity to provide a relevant response to the needs of the world such as the alleviation of poverty, the provision for basic needs, as well as leadership in the form of bringing resolution to situations of conflict. Christianity can provide solutions to these external pressures that is useful and valuable by means of biblical conscious-formation in the individual.

My suggestion is that the implications for Christian spirituality of Paul's insights in Phil 3:1-11 in terms of his description of justification and adoption can serve as an antidote to the pressure Christianity currently experiences to adopt new forms of biblical interpretation based on continual cultural change. Paul's ideological matrix is that God has defeated all forms of power, namely, the power of sin, the power of culture and the power of the suprahuman, in the Christ-event. Paul's spirituality is a Christ-centred spirituality. Paul highlights the Trinitarian character of our sanctification more than any other New Testament writer, but, for Paul, the role of the Father is dominant (Manjalay 2009:26-28). The cultural pressure that the Philippian Jesus-followers experienced came in the form of the ethnocentric-covenantalism propagated by the Judaizing opponents. Paul emphatically allays any fears or uncertainty which the Philippian Jesus-followers might have concerning the expectation which these opponents might create among them. The Philippian Jesus-followers have no need to conform to these external cultural expectations with their incessant insistence that circumcision is needed for gentile believers to become a part of God's family.

God, as the just Judge, has restored a dysfunctional humanity through the faithfulness of Jesus. This faithfulness is displayed through the suffering and death of Jesus, as well as through his resurrection from the dead. Paul refers to Jesus as κύριος, "Lord" (in Phil 3:1 and 3:8), and Χριστὸς, "Christ" (in 3:3 and 3:7-9). It appears that for Paul this means that the power of God that raised Jesus

²⁰⁶ Ngalula (2017:233-234) describes four approaches from these different denominations in Africa to the African cultures inherited from their ancestors. Of relevance for our investigation is the second approach to culture which Ngalula mentions, namely, "making the past and present heritage of Africa key to interpreting the Bible and Christian doctrine" (2017:233). African initiated churches follow this approach specifically. Even though the Bible and the themes of Christian doctrine and practice are accepted, the content is given an "African" interpretation (2017:234).

from the dead, confirms that Jesus is the son of God; it confirms that Jesus is Israel's long-awaited Messiah, namely, their anointed King (Paul uses the title "Christ" to refer to this reality); it also confirms that Jesus is the Ruler of the world (as opposed to Caesar who was believed to be the world's true "lord"; Paul uses the title "Lord" for Jesus to refer to this reality). Jesus is the object, source and occasion for the joy and the boasting of the Philippian Jesus-followers. The power of culture which can create relational dysfunction has been taken care of; Paul argues. God has done this through the humility, loyalty and faithfulness of Jesus. The expression of this was the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus' resurrection and his death are on par for Paul. Jesus' death and resurrection has as its end result our salvation, whilst the essential thrust of the resurrection is the justification and the sanctification of the believer (Manjalay 2009:30).

In the first chapter of this dissertation I mentioned that Sheldrake (2013:40-41) proposes five questions when discussing the dynamics of transformation. The first two questions are: what needs to transform and what stands in the way of transformation?

A spirituality which relies on the Law for obtaining righteousness stands in the way of transformation. Paul refers to all things which stand in the way of knowing Christ as excrement (Phil 3:8). Those who do this are called mutilators, evil workers and dogs (3:2); trusting in achievements and genealogy, namely, the flesh, for obtaining righteousness needs to be transformed; Paul warns his readers about those who do this (3:2). In summary: a spirituality of the Law needs to be transformed (3:4-6). And a spirituality of the Law stands in the way of the necessary transformation.

The Philippian Jesus-followers are free from the pressure of having to live up to the cultural expectations of the Judaizing opponents. Freedom from, as well as freedom for is central for Paul. Paul aims to become "all things to all men" (1 Cor 9:19-22) (NIV) since this is what God had done in the incarnation. Freedom from sin (Rom 6:18), the law (Gal 5:1), guilt (Rom 3:25), the drive to achieve (Rom 4:5), the remorseless terror of death (Rom 6:23) (Manjalay 2009:33-34).

The second contemporary trend which places pressure on Christianity, is an external trend, namely, “a radical question related to the needs of the world which require ethics, morals and conscience” (da Silva 2017:408). The relevance of Christianity’s response to the needs of the world can be found in aspects such as the alleviation of poverty, the provision for basic needs, as well as leadership “towards the moderation and resolution of conflicting situations” (2017:408). The human conscience is shaped by teaching God’s voice from a biblical perspective (2017:414).

The need, in other words, is for Christianity to provide leadership by means of shaping the conscience of its people through biblical teaching. Christianity’s response to the needs of the world should, as a result of this biblical conscious-forming, be relevant and valuable. I believe the implications of sanctification for Christian spirituality as described in the previous section, can valuably be applied to provide a way forward regarding the external pressure placed on Christianity.

Paul was a community man and his understanding of this flows from his understanding of a spirituality of communion (Koinonia) - with God and with fellow believers (Manjalay 2009:37). According to Michael Gorman (2004:Kindle locations 1435-1441), Paul’s spirituality is covenantal (relating to the God of Israel as Father), cruciform (relating to the crucified Christ), charismatic (relating to empowerment by the Spirit), communal (lived out in community with other believers), countercultural (living in contrast to many of the values found in the surrounding culture), new-creational (relating to God’s reconciling the whole world to himself) - all in a narrative (relating to the life of the church as individuals and as a community telling a different story to the one the surrounding culture would know) shape, “as the means to embody the story of God renewing covenant and redeeming the world through the crucified Christ” (2004:Kindle locations 1441).

Paul presents a theology of martyrdom as strategy for withstanding both the internal and the external pressures facing the Philippian community. In Phil 3:4-11 Paul presents the practical ways in which his own life is transformed in the example of the humility and faithfulness of Jesus himself as was presented in 2:6-11.

Sheldrake (2013:40-41), in reference to his five questions about transformation, also asks: where and how does transformation take place?

Transformation is set in motion through an intimate encounter with the risen Christ (Phil 3:7). It is because of God's grace that Paul can worship God through the Spirit and that he can boast in Christ Jesus (3:3). The *kenosis*-attitude of Christ, as Paul presents it in 2:6-11, sets in motion a lifelong process of transformation in the life of Paul the apostle. This process of transformation was driven continuously by *phronesis* (ἡγέομαι "count/consider" is the word Paul uses three times in 3:1-11; this word has the same semantic range as φρονέω which Paul uses in 2:5 and which forms the basis of his use of ἡγέομαι in 3:1-11). Trust, fidelity and loyalty to the faithfulness of Jesus justifies the believer (3:9) - this is what includes believers in God's covenant and in God's family; this is what circumcision entails. This justification is lived out within the context of a community of believers, namely, God's family (3:1). This community is a family of brothers and sisters in Christ (3:1). Transformation, therefore, takes place in Christ and in community through the power of the Spirit.

Lastly, Sheldrake (2013:40-41) asks: what is the aim of transformation?

This *phronesis* brings Paul to the following conclusion: his ultimate aim is to know (γινῶσις) Christ, namely, to be found in him, to share in the power of his resurrection, to have the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, and to become like him in his death. In other words, Paul's ultimate goal, as presented in Phil 3:1-11, is to mimic (*mimesis*) the *kenosis* (to empty oneself of power) of Christ. In the section on argumentative texture it was also suggested that Paul presents a theology of martyrdom as strategy for withstanding both the internal and the external pressures facing the Philippian community. This theology of martyrdom finds primary expression in the humility and faithfulness of Jesus as Paul presents it in 2:6-11. Through Paul's presentation of the examples of Timothy (humility in 2:19-24) and Epaphroditus (faithfulness in 2:25-30) the Jesus-followers in Philippi have examples from the lives of fellow Jesus-followers of a theology of martyrdom. This, I

believe, is what it means for the Jesus-followers in Philippi to live a life in accordance with 1:27. In 3:1-11 Paul also presents his own life as an example of the humility and faithfulness of Jesus.

Paul's *mimesis* is, therefore, a knowledge of Christ rather than a confidence in the flesh. In the past, this was based on Paul's ability to obey the Law of Moses (a spirituality of the Law characterized by circumcision, namely, heritage and achievements). Paul now considers (ἡγέομαι) this as excrement. Worshipping God in the Spirit through a life of trust, loyalty and fidelity to the faithfulness of Jesus characterizes Paul's process of transformation which culminates at the resurrection out from among the physically dead at the Parousia of Christ. This eschatological motif determines the reaction of the believer to any and all circumstances in this life. As Paul indicates sixteen times in this letter, and, also at the start of this passage, this truth can only have one appropriate result: Rejoice in the Lord! (3:1), no matter what.

In Phil 3:8-11 Paul stipulates the results of his life-changing encounter with the risen Christ: what he previously counted as gain he now counts as loss. Paul expands on the meaning of this "knowing" when he says that he wants to be found in Christ, that is, to gain him and to know the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead (3:7-11).

The resurrection of Christ in the past informs Paul's hope for future glorification: because Jesus was raised from the dead, believers will be raised with him at his parousia (the expectation which Paul expresses with his reference to the bodily resurrection at the end of Phil 3:11) - all of which ensures that the believer can share in the sufferings of Christ (whatever they may be), being conformed to him in his death (this expresses Paul's desire to be continually transformed in his nature in accordance with the nature of Christ). The power and fellowship of the risen Jesus is guaranteed to the believer on the path of faithfulness. The power and fellowship of Jesus - through the Spirit and in community with other believers - births and sustains the believers' spirituality.

The need for Christianity to provide leadership by means of shaping the conscience of its people through biblical teaching can valuably be based on Paul's *mimesis* of the *kenosis* of Jesus. The forming of a biblical conscience based on Phil 3:1-11 should provide Jesus-followers with an understanding of the value and importance of a life lived in service of others. This life, when characterized by humility and faithfulness, is a Messiah-shaped spirituality of weakness and vulnerability. This, Paul suggests, is true power. And this, I suggest, empowers Christianity to provide solutions to the needs of the world which are useful and valuable.

Paul's spirituality in Philippians 3:1-11 can now be presented as follows:

The alert awareness Paul gives to the triune God who graciously includes Paul in his covenant - boasting in the Son Jesus Christ and worshipping the Father through the Spirit. He responds to the reality of the Trinity in the dailiness of his life by his intentional striving (*mimesis*) to be found in Christ, that is, to gain him and to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death (*kenosis*), and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. This is a process of gradually being transformed in the whole of his being by this mysterious triune God who ultimately concerns him. This transformation is defined as a movement from a spirituality of the Law which he now considers (*phronesis*) to be excrement, to a justification based on faithfulness in Jesus and through the faithfulness of Jesus. This is a process of self-transcendence in love which culminates in the glorification through the resurrection of Paul as a Jesus-follower. The believing covenantal community of brothers and sisters in Christ and through the Spirit is the context within which Paul is transformed. The gradual process of being transformed in imitation of Jesus, happens in the world that already is whilst believers eagerly await the new world to come. This is inaugurated apocalyptic eschatology.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter the focus was on the ways in which the biblical text functions as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. The chapter was divided into three sections. First, an exploration of the art of biblical interpretation was presented. Competent hermeneutics towards biblical texts is inevitable (as I indicated under the aim section in chapter one). A short investigation of hermeneutics was relevant in this chapter given my suggestion that the Bible is used irresponsibly in many instances when it is used as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. The model of the communicative process provided by Lategan (2009b:89) presents a holistic picture of the communication process. The model consists of the mimetic axis of representation, as well as the rhetorical axis of communication. The mimetic axis of representation showed the different operations that is involved in the construction of the world of the text²⁰⁷. The rhetorical axis of communication point to the communicative thrust of the text. The communicative thrust of the text of Phil 3:1-11 was the primary area of focus in the current chapter, whilst attention was given to the mimetic axis of representation in chapter two and chapter three.

Second, a definition of Christian spirituality, as well as a description of the characteristics of Christian spirituality was presented. The Christian's total response of faith, made effective through love and vivified by the Holy Spirit, to God's self-manifestation in Christ was presented as a working definition of Christian spirituality. Modern characteristics of spirituality was described in terms of its movement away from outer-directed authority, namely, inherited religious and social identities or value-systems, to inner-directed experience which is seen as more authentic. The neglect of the Bible as a spiritual resource in the assessment of religious experience can lead to confusion, error, imbalance, idolatry, and a lack of spiritual discernment seduced away from the worship of Christ. In chapter one of this dissertation I indicated the problematic developments surrounding the limited and irresponsible use of the biblical text as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. The need to identify

²⁰⁷ This was the focus during the exegetical work which was done on Phil 3:1-11 in chapter two.

a defining method in the study of Christian spirituality was also highlighted. The aim of this study, therefore, is to emphasise strongly that the biblical text, as the privileged text of Christian spirituality, should be given a preferential role in order to function as an invaluable source for the assessment of religious experience.

These modern characteristics of Christian spirituality were then practically presented in the form of two contemporary trends which challenge Christianity. The first trend is an internal trend, namely, the pressure on Christianity to adopt new theological interpretations based on continual cultural change. Those who are members of a Christian community are, at the same time, members of society. These members continually experience pressure towards cultural change.

The second trend is an external trend, namely, a radical question related to the needs of the world which require ethics, morals and conscience. The relevance of Christianity's response to the needs of the world can be found in aspects such as the alleviation of poverty, the provision for basic needs, as well as leadership towards the moderation and resolution of conflicting situations. The human conscience can be shaped by teaching God's voice from a biblical perspective.

Finally, I attempted to present the relevance of Paul's compact, yet significant insights in Phil 3:1-11 for Christian spirituality. Certain key questions regarding Paul's spirituality in 3:1-11 - presented in the methodology section of chapter one - guided our exploration in this final section. These questions are: what are the key aspects of Christian spirituality which can be gathered from Paul's deep and thick description in 3:1-11? Is it possible for these insights into Paul's spirituality, as presented in 3:1-11, to make a contribution to the current discussion on Christian spirituality? What contributions does Paul's spirituality in 3:1-11 make to this discussion? How does Paul's spirituality in 3:1-11 influence the current discussion on Christian spirituality?

Chapter five

Conclusion

1. Introduction

The aim of this final chapter is to provide a concluding summary of my investigation of the ways in which the biblical text of Phil 3:1-11 can provide rootedness and direction to Christian spirituality, namely, the lived experience of faith. I will use the themes and questions presented in chapter one of this dissertation to guide the discussion of this final chapter. The motivation and aim, the problem statement, the hypothesis, and the methodology - as it was presented in chapter one - will provide the framework of this chapter. I also present two examples of an irresponsible use of the biblical text as the privileged text of Christian spirituality, and, finally, I conclude this chapter by presenting an example, as well as some questions and suggestions which might fruitfully assist in further investigating and applying the findings of my research.

2. The biblical text as the privileged text of Christian spirituality

In chapter one, the limited and irresponsible use of the biblical text, as the privileged text of Christian spirituality, in the assessment of religious experience was presented as problematic. Whenever the biblical text does not function responsibly as the privileged text of Christian spirituality, Christian spirituality often develops into neurosis and selfishness, can become pretentious, and can even turn violent. One of the characteristics of spiritual abuse is an unbalanced approach where feelings and experience are given more weight than the biblical text. Strange and

unique methods of biblical interpretation is also characteristic of spiritual abuse. Two examples from scholars who argue for the responsible use of the biblical text when it is used as the privileged text of Christian spirituality will now be presented.

First, Jeremy Punt provides an example of the ways in which an irresponsible use of the biblical text can develop into selfishness and neurosis, can become pretentious, and can even turn violent. According to Punt (2014:5) positions which claim that the Bible unequivocally condemns homosexuality “derive more from entrenched heteronormative and homophobic positions than from responsible engagement with biblical texts.” Statements which claim that homosexuality is “un-African, non-existent, or incidental at best, and then the result of Western influence, is equally misplaced” (2014:5). Punt (2014:5-6) then highlights three aspects which could be seen as vital for addressing these unbiblical and un-African claims: textual selectivity; deficient hermeneutics; and contextual deficits. Punt (2014:23) concludes his investigation and argument by emphasising that, whenever an all-determinative heteronormative overlay is used in an analysis of the socio-cultural situation and in biblical interpretation, the outcomes of the analysis and interpretation is clouded and prejudiced. Elsewhere, Punt (2006:419-431) argues for an ethics of interpretation which stands within the broader ethos of interpretation. According to Punt (2006:419) (quoting Countryman) this ethos of interpretation “refers not just to the canonical texts but to the larger realities environing them and the modern reader, and, in particular, to the experience of discovering truth, which calls our culturally constructed humanity into question.”

A second example of the ways in which an irresponsible use of the biblical text can lead to selfishness and neurosis, can become pretentious, and can even turn violent, comes from the work of Amy-Jill Levine (2004:91-132). In a roundtable discussion Levine highlights the legacy of anti-Judaism in historical-critical, early feminist, and liberation-theological biblical commentary. Levine suggests that this legacy is still present in feminist and non-feminist studies. According to Levine, “the sources for feminist anti-Judaism are inherent neither in specific postcolonial cultural settings ... nor in the biblical text” (2004:95). Levine points to the source of anti-Judaism as “what the

postcolonial scholar educated in the West learned along with colleagues in the Western classroom and library” (2004:96). Levine then suggests ways in which anti-Judaism biases in biblical and theological studies might be highlighted. The list of suggestions includes learning more about Jewish history, the avoidance of generalized negative statements about Judaism, the inclusion of Jewish voices in compendiums, the updating of libraries with Jewish resources, as well as highlighting and countering the problem when we see it (2004:97-99).

From these two examples the dangers involved in an irresponsible use of the biblical text as the privileged text of Christian spirituality are emphasized.

My aim in this dissertation was, therefore, to emphasise strongly that the biblical text, as the privileged text of Christian spirituality, should be given a preferential role in order to function as an invaluable source for the assessment of religious experience. Two overarching methodological approaches were followed in this investigation. First, Phil 3:1-11 was used as a case study to present an example of the ways in which the biblical text can function as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. My hypothesis, as it was presented in chapter one, was based on the assumption that the exegetical insights gained from 3:1-11 can function as a counterweight to the shortcomings present in many modern approaches to, and definitions of, Christian spirituality. The importance of an exegetical approach to the biblical text which aims at creating a synergy between a theological and historical reading of the biblical text was emphasized in the section on methodology in chapter one. In line with this aim, my exegetical approach of choice was the socio-rhetorical criticism pioneered by Vernon K. Robbins. The traditional theological categories of justification, adoption, and sanctification served as useful and valuable categories for the investigation of the implications of 3:1-11 for Christian spirituality.

A second methodological approach was followed, namely, a literature study of spirituality in its current form in order to highlight the fluidity involved in attempts to define spirituality and Christian spirituality.

The results of the dialogue of my investigation of the biblical text of Phil 3:1-11, as well as of the academic field of Christian spirituality can be presented in reference to the hypothesis of this dissertation as described in chapter one. The hypothesis of my dissertation, in short, is that the results of Paul's careful consideration of his experience of the resurrected Jesus in light of scripture - as presented in Phil 3:1-11 - can function as an antidote to the current internal pressure which Christianity faces to adopt new theological interpretation in line with continual cultural change. In addition to relieving the internal pressure, I also suggest that Paul's spirituality in 3:1-11 can serve as an antidote to the external pressure which Christianity faces of having to provide solutions to the needs of the world by means of biblical conscience-formation.

My investigation, I suggest, confirmed this hypothesis in the following manner. First, the cultural pressure that the Philippian Jesus-followers experienced came in the form of the ethnocentric-covenantalism propagated by the Judaizing opponents. Paul emphatically allays any fears or uncertainty which the Philippian Jesus-followers might have concerning the expectation which these opponents might create among them. The Philippian Jesus-followers have no need to conform to these external cultural expectations with their incessant insistence that circumcision is needed for gentile believers to become a part of God's family. The Philippian Jesus-followers are free from the pressure of having to live up to the cultural expectations of the Judaizing opponents. In the Christ-event, God has defeated all forms of power, including the power of culture to create relational dysfunction.

Second, I also suggested that the insights gained from Phil 3:1-11 regarding the effects of the Christ-event can serve as an antidote to the external pressure Christianity currently experiences in the form of having to provide solutions to the needs of the world by means of biblical conscience-formation. The implications of the Christ-event in the life of a Jesus-follower was presented as God enabling transformative participation in the life of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

God's family is characterised by their humility and faithfulness, that is, their desire to be transformed by sharing in the suffering of Christ, by being conformed to the death of Jesus, as well

as to be resurrected from the dead themselves. Paul most probably wrote the letter to the Philippian Jesus-followers to encourage them to remain loyal and faithful to the example of humility that the life, suffering and death of Jesus presented to them. Our analysis of the argumentative texture of Phil 3:1-11 highlighted that Paul presents the solution to the challenges facing the Philippian Jesus-followers to be their own humility and faithfulness, namely, Paul's spirituality of weakness and vulnerability (Manjaly 2009:31).

Paul considers all of his earlier benefits as loss and excrement (Phil 3:8). His ultimate aim is to have knowledge (γνῶσις) of Christ (3:8), namely, to be found in him (3:9), to know the power of his resurrection (3:10), to know the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings (3:10), to become like him in his death (3:10), and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead (3:11). Joy, a word Paul uses sixteen times in the letter to the Philippians, characterizes this type of spirituality, since it takes its point of reference for every single experience in this life as the example of Christ in his life, suffering, death, and his resurrection in which believers now share through trust, fidelity, and loyalty to the faithfulness of Christ (3:9). In other words, φρόνησις leads Paul to the realization that his ultimate concern should be to mimic (μίμησις) the κένωσις (to empty oneself of power) of Christ (Paul poetically expresses this κένωσις of Christ in 2:5-11). Paul expresses this process in his own life in 3:1-11.

In the following section I present an example, as well as some questions and suggestions which might be fruitfully applied to further investigate and apply the findings of my research.

3. Questions for possible further research

The global Corona-virus pandemic has resulted in a time of loss, grief and uncertainty for many people. It could be argued that a crisis functions as a discloser of the inadequacies which characterizes most, if not all, ideologies, as well as the systems which is based on these ideologies. Crisis can, fortunately, also function as an accelerator of long-overdue and much-needed change. In

many ways the global BLM-movement²⁰⁸ is characteristic of the way in which a crisis can disclose systemic violence (in its many forms), and demand and drive much-needed and long-overdue change. Walter Brueggemann, in the preface to his book *Virus as a Summons to Faith*, says that “any serious crisis is a summons for us to reread the Bible afresh” (2020:Kindle locations 106). Brueggemann then proceeds to read a selection of passages from the Bible afresh. In countering the twin habits of denial and despair as a reaction during times of loss, grief, and uncertainty, Brueggemann presents an interpretation of the “matrix of groan” by means of a dialogue between Is 42:14-15 and Paul’s use of the image of “the pains of childbirth” (NIV) from Rom 8:22. Brueggemann urges the reader to discover, from the pages of the biblical text, “a model of the groan that will break the despair and the cry that will override the denial” (2020:69). According to Brueggemann both the exile and the cross of Christ can serve as the context for such hope: “Only when we, hoppers for new creation, disown our present dysfunction in its deathliness and dare to voice a groan that matches God’s birthing of newness, only then will God give” (2020:69).

In light of the example of Brueggemann’s fresh reading of the biblical text in response to a moment of crisis, I present a couple of questions which might be fruitfully used to guide future research on the ways in which the biblical text can function responsibly as the privileged text of Christian spirituality. First, in what ways might the responsible use of the biblical text as the privileged text of Christian spirituality be applied in response to the loss, grief and uncertainty experienced by many individuals and communities globally in light of the Corona-virus pandemic, as well as other crises? Second, how can the Bible be brought into dialogue with the ways in which this crisis discloses and accelerates long-overdue and much-needed change in a manner which enables local communities of faithfulness to respond to these challenges and opportunities with a Biblically-

²⁰⁸ The Black Lives Matter (BLM) Foundation, Inc “is a global organization in the US, UK, and Canada, whose mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes” (www.blacklivesmatter.com).

formed conscience? Finally, is it possible for a Biblically-formed Christian spirituality to overcome any form of modern ideological bias? If so, in what ways might this be done?

Despite the loss, grief, and uncertainty caused by a global crisis such as the Corona-virus, a Biblical Christian spirituality should also be aware of the urgency involved in seizing the opportunity presented by this moment. This opportunity can be defined as a moment in history in which Jesus-followers can be a part of the shaping of a brand-new future in truly innovative ways. The church, when it reads the biblical text in a responsible manner as the privileged text of Christian spirituality, can help shape a deeper understanding and experience of the kind of world and the kind of humanity that God envisions. In this way the church can play its part in creating an immediate future which better reflects and echoes God's ultimate, restored and transformed future.

4. Conclusion

Whenever the biblical text is used to support any kind of ideology, or to justify discrimination against fellow human beings, interpreters come to a deeper understanding of the dangers, as well as the responsibilities involved in hermeneutics. All interpretations of the Bible are not equally valid and the process of interpretation is not innocent. Holy wars fought in the name of God - which might even justify the killing of fellow human beings - are futile. At the same time, biblical interpreters can experience the ways in which a responsible reading of the biblical text powerfully overcomes ideological bias. Every context where the biblical text is read, re-read, and interpreted, presents its own challenges and leads to new reading experiences. In this way the biblical thrust of the equality of all people before God can be re-discovered. A fuller understanding of the kind of world and the kind of humanity envisaged by God is only possible once this richness of diversity is valued. What is possible is always more than what is real (Lategan 2009b:103-104).

The hypothesis of my dissertation, also presented in chapter one, is that the results of Paul's careful consideration of his experience of the resurrected Jesus in light of scripture - as presented in

Phil 3:1-11 - can function as an antidote to the current internal pressure which Christianity faces to adopt new theological interpretation in line with continual cultural change. In addition to relieving the internal pressure, I also suggested that Paul's spirituality in 3:1-11 can serve as an antidote to the external pressure which Christianity faces of having to provide solutions to the needs of the world by means of biblical conscience-formation.

First, I presented these suggestions in terms of the implications for Christian spirituality of the exegetical work which was done on Phil 3:1-11. The traditional theological categories of justification, adoption, and sanctification served as useful and valuable categories for the analysis of the implications for Christian spirituality of 3:1-11. The primary question here was: what are the key aspects of Christian spirituality which can be gathered from Paul's deep and thick description in 3:1-11? God addressed the problem of all relational dysfunction by means of the Christ-event, namely, the suffering, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus. Our investigation showed that Paul is of the strong conviction that through God's display of power in raising Jesus from the dead, God's reign over all other forms of power was confirmed. Paul's ideological matrix is, therefore, that Jesus appeared as a human being, suffered, died and was resurrected from the dead. This is what is referred to as the Christ-event. The Christ-event confirms and catalyses two crucial realities, namely, the identity of God, as well as the true identity of God's people. God, as the just Judge, has restored a dysfunctional humanity through the faithfulness of Jesus. This faithfulness is displayed through his suffering, death and resurrection from the dead. Jesus-followers now worship God through His Spirit (3:3). The Spirit of God, then, is the dynamic life-force of the Jesus-following community. In the example of 2:6-11, I suggested, Paul presents the power of God which conquered all other forms of power, namely, power through humility and faithfulness.

Second, I presented the practical significance of the exegetical work which was done on Phil 3:1-11 for the current discussion on Christian spirituality. The following questions guided our discussion here: is it possible for these insights into Paul's spirituality, as presented in 3:1-11, to make a contribution to the current discussion on Christian spirituality? What contributions does Paul's

spirituality in 3:1-11 make to this discussion? How does Paul's spirituality in 3:1-11 influence the current discussion on Christian spirituality?

I suggested that Paul's spirituality in Phil 3:1-11 can function as an antidote to the internal pressure to adopt new theological interpretation in line with continual cultural change.

The cultural pressure that the Philippian Jesus-followers experienced came in the form of the ethnocentric-covenantalism propagated by the Judaizing opponents. Paul emphatically allays any fears or uncertainty which the Philippian Jesus-followers might have concerning the expectation which these opponents might create among them. The Philippian Jesus-followers have no need to conform to these external cultural expectations with their incessant insistence that circumcision is needed for gentile believers to become a part of God's family. The Philippian Jesus-followers are free from the pressure of having to live up to the cultural expectations of the Judaizing opponents. In the Christ-event, God has defeated all forms of power, including the power of culture to create relational dysfunction.

Finally, I suggested that the insights gained from Phil 3:1-11 regarding the effects of the Christ-event can serve as an antidote to the external pressure Christianity currently experiences in the form of having to provide solutions to the needs of the world by means of biblical conscience-formation. The implications of the Christ-event in the life of a Jesus-follower was presented as God enabling transformative participation in the life of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

God's family is characterised by their humility and faithfulness, that is, their desire to be transformed by sharing in the suffering of Christ, by being conformed to the death of Jesus, as well as to be resurrected from the dead themselves. This example can be referred to as the spirituality of weakness and vulnerability which Paul wants the Philippian Jesus-followers to imitate.

The Christ-event benefits humanity not only when they believe this good news, but the Christ-event also benefits humanity when they participate in transformative justice corporately and

individually. In other words, the Christ-event not only secures the status of Jesus-followers as being righteous, it also empowers Jesus-followers to live lives characterised by humility and faithfulness.

I present, in conclusion, the following quote by Wiles:

Once humans perceive their Creator accurately, they are able to relate to one another in new ways, ways that are not determined by attempts to measure up to some external standards ... In Christ's resurrection and exaltation, Paul perceived the victory of God over all foes and the ultimate shalom of all creation. The human response to this revelation of God in Christ are the responses of faith and hope. The individual moment of grace - no matter how overwhelming at the moment - is not, in itself, enough. In order for grace to take root in human life, in human society, individual humans must say yes to the moment of grace ... To believe that God has raised Christ from the dead is to commit oneself to live out of that gracious reality - not only in relation to God but in relation to oneself and to one's neighbours (Wiles 2000:134).

An accurate understanding of who God is, according to Wiles, frees a follower of Jesus from having to measure up to some external standards. In the Christ-event God has defeated all other forms of power. Moreover, the Christ-event requires and enables a Jesus-follower to commit to a life which is lived from within the gracious reality of the Christ-event in relation to God, oneself, and one's neighbours. The greatest value of Wiles' insights for our investigation, I suggest, can be found in the way in which Wiles highlights the movement from the indicative to the imperative: because of God's decisive action in the Christ-event, God's eschatological kingdom has already been realized in this world and Jesus-followers are empowered to participate in this kingdom through a spirituality of weakness and vulnerability, namely, in the form of humility and faithfulness. This movement from the indicative to the imperative accurately portray, I believe, the logical flow of Paul's argument in Phil 3:1-11 as well.

It is my sincere hope and prayer that the analysis of the biblical text of Phil 3:1-11 presented in this dissertation, as well as the way in which these findings were brought into dialogue with Christian spirituality, presents Christian spirituality with a rootedness and direction which can assist

all Jesus-followers to live lives characterised by weakness and vulnerability in the example of the servant-attitude of Christ. Despite all the loss, grief, and uncertainty which characterises the current global psyche in the face of major crises, I echo Paul's command in 3:1: "for what remains to be said, my family, make Jesus, the King, the source and the object of your joy!"

Appendix A

1. Definitions of spirituality

The list of definitions of spirituality provided here aims to provide more insight into the fluidity involved in trying to define the term spirituality. I present a list of definitions in alphabetical order. A summary of the different definitions is presented in diagram 12.

According to Barton, “spirituality ... has to do with the sense of the divine presence and living in the light of that presence” (Barton 1992:1).

Barbara Bowe (2003:Kindle locations 305-312) gives a thorough description of the term spirituality: “The difficulty in defining this word precisely stems from the broad range of meanings that the term spirituality contains. Etymologically, the word derives from the Latin, *spiritus*, meaning ‘breath, life, spirit.’ And so, in its broadest sense, spirituality has to do with the whole of our life grounded in ultimate reality, in the spirit, and attuned to the spiritual dimension of existence - that which both animates and transcends our bodily, physical selves. For someone who accepts religious categories, this spiritual dimension is what Rudolph Otto calls the sacred *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, the awe-inspiring mystery that is at the heart of all life and is at once both fearful and irresistibly attractive. To use the term spirituality, then, first of all, assumes the existence of this transcendent reality, this spirit-filled dimension of life, and then argues further that we humans can and do experience this reality in our midst and that we are drawn to both name and respond to it.”

Bowe (2003:11) poignantly states, “the simple word God serves, for most believers, as the traditional name for this mystery. Spirituality is the dynamic term that points to a lived experience of this mystery in the day to day. It describes how we live our lives in response to this Ultimate Reality.”

For Cunningham & Egan (1996:6) spirituality refers to “that dimension or dimensions of human experience which provide the spiritual aspect of our lives by enriching and giving ‘thickness’ to our ordinary existence.”

For Guinan (1994) spirituality can be understood in two different ways:

- 1) Spirituality deals with the human response to the transcendent.
- 2) “the human response and the transcendent reality being responded to are taken seriously.

The two poles of the relationship are held together and studied together” (1994:2).

Kodell (1978) defines spirituality as “simply ... relationship to God. This is something every human being has. It affects the deepest part of a person, the ‘spirit,’ however God is recognized or defined, and even if he is denied” (1978:xi).

Celia Kourie writes, “spirituality ... refers to the *raison d’être* of our existence, the meaning and values to which we ascribe, whether these be religious or not. Spirituality, in this wider sense refers to the ultimate values and commitments upon which we base our lives” (2000:12).

John Macquarrie (1972:40) defines spirituality as “becoming a person in the fullest sense.”

Allister McGrath (1999) defines spirituality as, “the quest for a fulfilled and authentic religious life, involving the bringing together of the ideas distinctive of that religion and the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of that religion” (2013:Kindle locations 154-156).

Ochs says spirituality is, “the process of coming into relationship with reality” (1997:13).

One way of developing this principle of a human being becoming fully human is what Pascal terms the pursuit of God. For Blaise Pascal, true spirituality consists in the pursuit of God: “So what insights does this image of a feast offer for our understanding of spirituality? One of the answers that can be given is found in the writings of Blaise Pascal, who saw a human awareness of an inner

emptiness as ultimately resting upon the absence of God. What else does this longing and helplessness proclaim, but that there was once in each person a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? We try to fill this in vain with everything around us, seeking in things that are not there the help we cannot find in those that are there. Yet none can change things, because this infinite abyss can only be filled with something that is infinite and unchanging - in other words, by God himself. God alone is our true good. Pascal's argument is that nothing other than God is able to fill the chasm that lies within us. We may try to fill this void with other things - such as financial success or status - but in the end these will not and cannot satisfy. Only God is able to meet this need. The image of feasting, for Pascal, thus points to our need to ensure that we allow nothing and no one other than God to become the object of our desire. If we do so, they will disappoint and betray us. True spirituality consists in the pursuit of God, and not allowing our desire to become attached to anything or anyone else" (McGrath 1999:Kindle locations 2546-2557).

Eugene Peterson (1997:Kindle locations 74-77) notes that, "Spirituality is the attention we give to our souls, to the invisible interior of our lives that is the core of our identity, these image-of-God souls that comprise our uniqueness and glory. Spirituality is the concern we have for the invisibility that inheres in every visibility, for the interior that provides content to every exterior. It necessarily deals much with innerness, with silence, with solitude. It takes all matters of soul with utmost seriousness."

Elsewhere Peterson states, "Spirituality, the alert attention we give to a living God and the faithful response we make to him in community" (Peterson 1997:Kindle locations 506-507).

In another short essay, Peterson (2005:767-768) says, "'Spirituality' ... provides a catchall term that recognizes an organic linkage between this Beyond (transcendence) and Within (intimacy) that is part of everyone's experience ... 'spirituality' ... God alive and active and present" (2005:767-768).

Richard Rohr (2010:15) guides us in this same direction when he says that “we are essentially related to something Infinite ... in fact, we cannot know the full meaning of our life until we see we are a little strand in a much larger tapestry.”

According to Philip Sheldrake (2013), spirituality has to do with the totality of our lives: “First, spirituality concerns what is holistic - that is, a fully integrated approach to life” (2013:3). Spirituality involves our need for direction and purpose in life, i.e. a quest for what is of ultimate value and importance: “spirituality is frequently understood to involve a quest for meaning, including the purpose of life, and for a sense of life direction” (2013:3). “Finally, contemporary definitions of spirituality often relate it to the quest for ultimate values in contrast to an instrumentalized or purely materialistic approach to life” (2013:4).

Bonnie Thurston (2005:57) defines spirituality as “affective and personally integrated religion.”

Gordon Wakefield (2001:1) says that “spirituality is what makes us tick.”

Barbara Bowe (2003) quotes a few authors on their definition of spirituality:

- 1) “Philosophers speak of our human spirituality as our capacity for self-transcendence, a capacity demonstrated in our ability to know the truth, to relate to others lovingly, and to commit ourselves freely to persons and ideals. Psychologists sometimes use the term [spirituality] for that aspect of personal essence that gives a person power, energy, and motive force. Religious persons speak of spirituality as the actualization of human self-transcendence by whatever is acknowledged as the ultimate or the Holy (Wolski Conn)
- 2) A spirituality is the expression of a dialectical personal growth from the inauthentic to the authentic. Total authenticity of a human person would be her or his complete self-transcendence in love. Conversely, total inauthenticity would be complete self-alienation, self-centeredness in hate (Kinerk)

- 3) [Spirituality is] the unique and personal response of individuals to all that calls them to integrity and transcendence (Schneiders)” (Bowe 2003:10-11).

<u>Author</u>	<u>Definition of spirituality</u>
Barton	Spirituality is the sense of the divine presence and the living in light of that presence.
Bowe	Spirituality is the acknowledgement of a transcendent reality, as well as our response to this mysterious reality - a belief that we can and do experience and name this reality. It is both fearful and irresistibly attractive.
Cunningham & Egan	Spirituality is that dimension or dimensions of human experience which provide the spiritual aspect of our lives by enriching and giving thickness to our ordinary existence.
Guinan	Spirituality deals with the human response to the transcendent.
Kinerk	Spirituality is the expression of a dialectical personal growth from the inauthentic to the authentic. Total authenticity of a human person would be her or his complete self-transcendence in love.
Kodell	Spirituality is relationship to God.
Kourie	Spirituality is the <i>raison d'être</i> of our existence; it refers to the ultimate values and commitments upon which we base our lives.
Macquarrie	Spirituality is becoming a person in the fullest sense.
McGrath	Spirituality is the quest for a fulfilled and authentic religious life.
Ochs	Spirituality is the process of coming into relationship with reality.
Pascal	Spirituality is the pursuit of God.
Peterson	Spirituality is the alert attention we give to a living God and the faithful response we make to him in community.
Rohr	Spirituality is our being related to something Infinite.
Schneiders	Spirituality is the experience of consciously striving to integrate one's life in terms not of isolation and self-absorption but of self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives.

Sheldrake	Spirituality involves our need for direction and purpose in life, namely, a quest for what is of ultimate value and importance.
Thurston	Spirituality is affective and personally integrated religion.
Wakefield	Spirituality is what makes us tick.
Wolski Conn	Spirituality is that aspect of personal essence that gives a person power, energy, and motive force/ Religious persons speak of spirituality as the actualization of human self-transcendence by whatever is acknowledged as the ultimate or the Holy.

Diagram 12

2. **Conclusion**

From this brief list of definitions, it can be deduced that spirituality has to do with the human response to an experience of a transcendent reality. Spirituality has to do with self-transcendence and becoming fully alive. Spirituality is about that which ultimately concerns a human being, and the ways in which the object of ultimate concern transforms a person's approach to all of life.

Appendix B

1. Definitions of Christian spirituality

The list of definitions of Christian spirituality provided here aims to provide insight into the variety and the fluidity involved in any attempt to define Christian spirituality. A summary of these definitions is presented in diagram 13. This list of definitions of Christian spirituality should be read in conjunction with the brief investigation into Christian spirituality which was done in chapter four.

Cunningham & Egan (1996:22-28) gives a rich list of definitions for Christian spirituality. I refer to them at length:

- 1) My spirituality is my Christian living as guided by the Holy Spirit. Each is a living out of the Christian life under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, through the gifts the indwelling spirit produces in us for our own personal sanctification and our contribution to the life of the community (Walter Burghardt).
- 2) A spirituality or a spiritual direction is a certain, symbolic way of hearing and living the Gospel. This 'Way' is conditioned by a period, a 'fertilized soil' the particular influence of a specific milieu. It can be incarnated in a clearly identified group of human beings and can continue, historically, enriched or impoverished. In this way a 'spiritual tradition' or 'school' of spirituality comes to be. There are a number of elements that describe a school of spirituality. Firstly, a given number emphases or constants regarding one or another aspect of Christian faith or Life in the Spirit. secondly, a certain way of praying and a specific understanding of mission. Thirdly, their own pedagogical methods, whether

implicit or explicit. Fourthly, preferred biblical texts that call for close attention. Fifthly, rooted in an intense spiritual experience (Raymond Deville).

- 3) The term spirituality refers to the Spirit at work in persons 1) within a culture, 2) in relation to a tradition, 3) in memory of Jesus Christ, 4) in the light of contemporary events, hopes, sufferings and promises, 5) in efforts to combine elements of action and contemplation, 6) with respect to charism and community, 7) as expressed and authenticated in praxis (Michael Downey).
- 4) Christian spirituality is the daily, communal, lived expression of one's ultimate beliefs, characterized by openness to the self-transcending love of God, self, neighbor, and world through Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit (Elizabeth Dreyer).
- 5) A way of being a Christian, that has as its foundation an advance through death, sin, and slavery, in accordance with the Spirit, who is the life-giving power that sets the human person free. Christian spirituality consists in embracing the liberated body and thus being able to say 'Abba-Father!' and to enter into comradely communion with others (Gustavo Gutiérrez).
- 6) One of the essential features of biblical spirituality is the importance of the community, the church. Another is integrating one's life in the world with one's relationship with God. A third, among many, is the personal interaction with God through all sorts of prayer. Christian spirituality includes more than an introspective search for psychological health; ideally it integrates relationships to God and creation with those to self and others (Bradley Holt).
- 7) The specific Christian spirituality, then, is one that is centered on the experience of God as savior through Jesus. We acknowledge that the gift of life, of peace, of reconciliation, and of righteousness, comes from the crucified and resurrected Messiah. And in the messianic pattern enacted by Jesus' life and death, we recognize as well the model for our own acceptance of that gift. In every situation, our instinct is to 'look to Jesus' (Heb 12:2).

From beginning to end, the form of spirituality is the imitation of Christ (Luke Timothy Johnson).

- 8) Spirituality has to do with our experiencing of God and with the transformation of our consciousness and our lives as outcomes of that experience. Since God is in principle available to everyone, spirituality is not exclusively Christian. Christian spirituality is life in the Holy Spirit who incorporates the Christian into the Body of Jesus Christ, through whom the Christian has access to God the Creator in a life of faith, hope, love, and service. It is visionary, sacramental, relational, and transformational (Richard McBrien).
- 9) Literally, spirituality means life in God's Spirit and a living relationship with God's Spirit. Talk about Eastern or African spirituality unfortunately blurs this precise sense of the word and reduces it again to 'religiousness'. In a strict Christian sense, the word has to mean what Paul calls the new life '*en pneumati*' (Jurgen Moltmann).
- 10) A process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others (M. Robert Mulholland)
- 11) There are three major factors combined together in the living unity of the Christian religion: doctrine, worship, and deeds. The strength of the Christian religion lies in this complex structure embracing the whole of human life (John Macquarrie).
- 12) In its fundamental sense, spirituality is concerned with the shaping, empowering, and maturing of the 'spiritual person' (1 Cor 2:14-15) - that is, the person alive to and responsive to God in the world, as opposed to the person who merely exists within and responds to the world (Alister McGrath).
- 13) Christian spirituality is the lived experience of the Christian belief in both its general and more specialized forms; it is possible to distinguish spirituality from doctrine in that it concentrates not on faith itself but on the reaction that faith arouses in religious consciousness and practice. It can likewise be distinguished from Christian ethics in that

it treats not all human actions in their relation to God but those acts in which the relation to God is immediate and explicit (Bernard McGinn).

- 14) Spirituality is understood to be the way of life of a people, a movement by the Spirit of God, and the grounding of one's identity as a Christian in every circumstance of life. It is the struggle to live the totality of one's personal and communitarian life in keeping with the Gospel; spirituality is the orientation and perspective of all the dimensions of a person's life in the following of Jesus and in continuous dialogue with the Father (National Plan for Hispanic Ministry).
- 15) Spirituality refers to the unfolding, day by day, of that fundamental decision to become or to remain a Christian which we make at baptism, repeat at confirmation, and renew each time we receive the eucharist (William Reiser)
- 16) Christian spirituality, then, is personal participation in the mystery of Christ begun in faith, sealed by baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, nourished by the sharing in the Lord's Supper, which the community celebrated regularly in memory of Him who was truly present wherever his followers gathered, and was expressed by a simple life of universal love that bore witness to life in the Spirit and attracted others to faith (Sandra Schneiders).
- 17) I would suggest that what the word 'spirituality' seeks to express is the conscious human response to God that is both personal and ecclesial. In short: 'life in the Spirit' (Philip Sheldrake).
- 18) Spirituality as associated with breath suggests two things. First, spirituality in this sense is an animating life principle. Second, the spirit is the human person in his or her devotional aspect. Thus in the biblical sense the 'spiritual person' is one attracted to and in communion with the reality within and beyond the visible one. She or he is attracted to 'things of the spirit.' Spirituality in this sense is the practice of religion. What a person does with what that person believes is 'spirituality'. Spirituality is what the early

Christians did to put into practice what they believed. It was what they did to respond to a world filled with the presence of God and the risen Christ (Bonnie Thurston).

- 19) And if 'spirituality' can be given any coherent meaning, perhaps it is to be understood in terms of this task: each believer making his or her own that engagement with the questioning of the heart of faith which is so evident in the classical documents of Christian belief. The questioning involved here is not our interrogation of the data, but its interrogation of us. And the greatness of the Christian saints lies in their readiness to be questioned, judged, stripped naked, and left speechless by that which lies at the center of their faith (Rowan Williams).

McGrath (1999:Kindle locations 196-218) lists six definitions of Christian spirituality:

- 1) Spirituality is a lived experience, the effort to apply relevant elements in the deposit of Christian faith to the guidance of men and women towards their spiritual growth, the progressive development of their persons which flowers into a proportionately increased insight and joy (George Ganss).
- 2) Spirituality has to do with our experiencing of God and with the transformation of our consciousness and our lives as outcomes of that experience (Richard O'Brien).
- 3) Spirituality refers to a lived experience and a disciplined life of prayer and action, but it cannot be conceived apart from the specific theological beliefs that are ingredients in the forms of life that manifest authentic Christian faith (Don E. Saliers).
- 4) [Spirituality] is a useful term to describe how, individually and collectively, we personally appropriate the traditional Christian beliefs about God, humanity and the world, and express them in terms of our basic attitudes, life-style and activity (Philip Sheldrake).
- 5) Whatever else may be affirmed about a spirituality which has a biblical precedent and style, spiritual maturity or spiritual fulfilment necessarily involves the whole person - body, mind and soul, place, relationships - in connection with the whole of creation

throughout the era of time. Biblical spirituality encompasses the whole person in the totality of existence in the world, not some fragment or scrap or incident of a person (William Stringfellow).

- 6) [Spirituality] is the self-transcending character of all human persons, and everything that pertains to it, including, most importantly, the ways in which that perhaps infinitely malleable character is realized concretely in everyday life situations (Richard Woods).

<u>Author</u>	<u>Definition of Christian spirituality</u>
Burghardt	Christian living as guided by the Holy Spirit.
Deville	A symbolic way of hearing and living the gospel.
Downey	The Spirit at work in persons 1) within a culture 2) in relation to a tradition, 3) in memory of Jesus Christ, 4) in the light of contemporary events, hopes, sufferings and promises, 5) in efforts to combine elements of action and contemplation, 6) with respect to charism and community, 7) as expressed and authenticated in praxis.
Dryer	Christian spirituality is the daily, communal, lived expression of one's ultimate beliefs, characterized by openness to the self-transcending love of God, self, neighbor, and world through Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit.
Ganss	Lived experience in which the Christian faith is used for spiritual growth; it is a progressive development of their persons which flowers into a proportionately increased insight and joy.
Gutiérrez	An advance through death, sin and slavery in accordance with the life-giving Spirit that sets an individual free; it is an embrace of the liberated body, the ability to say "Abba-Father" and comradely communion with others.

Holt	An integration of relationships to God and creation with those to self and others.
Timothy Johnson	An experience centred on God as Saviour through Jesus. The form of spirituality is the imitation of Christ.
McBrien	The experience of God and the transformation of our consciousness and lives as a result. It is life in the Holy Spirit who incorporates the Christian into the Body of Jesus Christ, through whom the Christian has access to God the Creator in a life of faith, hope, love, and service. It is visionary, sacramental, relational, and transformational.
Moltmann	Literally it means life in God's Spirit and a relationship with the Spirit.
Mulholland	A process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others.
Macquarrie	Doctrine, worship and deeds embracing the whole of human life.
McGrath	The shaping, empowering and maturing of a person alive and responsive to God in the world.
McGinn	The lived experience of the Christian belief in both its general and more specialized forms.
O'Brien	Experiencing God and the transformation of our consciousness and our lives as outcomes of that experience.
Reiser	The daily unfolding of the fundamental decision to become and to remain a Christian.
Saliers	Lived experience and a disciplined life of prayer and action in relation to specific theological beliefs that are ingredients in the forms of life that manifest authentic Christian faith.

Schneiders	Personal participation in the mystery of Christ expressed by a simple life of universal love that bore witness to life in the Spirit and attracts others to faith.
Sheldrake	Spirituality is how, individually and collectively, we personally appropriate the traditional Christian beliefs about God, humanity and the world, and express them in terms of our basic attitudes, life-style and activity; the conscious human response to God that is both personal and ecclesial.
Stringfellow	Biblical spirituality encompasses the whole person in the totality of existence in the world, not some fragment or scrap or incident of a person.
Thurston	What a person does with what that person believes is 'spirituality'. Spirituality is what the early Christians did to put into practice what they believed. It was what they did to respond to a world filled with the presence of God and the risen Christ.
Williams	The readiness to be questioned, judged, stripped naked, and left speechless by that which lies at the center of our faith.
Woods	Spirituality is the self-transcending character of all human persons, and everything that pertains to it, including, most importantly, the ways in which that perhaps infinitely malleable character is realized concretely in everyday life situations.

Diagram 13

2. **Conclusion**

In chapter four of this dissertation Christian spirituality was presented in terms of four characteristics, namely, Christian spirituality is biblical, relational, transformative, and eschatological. From the presentation of the above-mentioned definitions of Christian spirituality, the reader can become more aware of the variety and fluidity of the content of these categories. Christian

spirituality, as the lived expression of a person's ultimate beliefs, inevitably, leads to this variety and fluidity. The variety and fluidity which characterises different definitions of Christian spirituality should be embraced and celebrated. In this dissertation it is argued, however, that all Christian spirituality should be biblical spirituality. A biblical Christian spirituality, it is argued in this dissertation, could provide a rootedness and direction to the lived experience of faith. The rootedness and direction which the biblical text provides to the lived experience of faith, can, furthermore, serve as an antidote when Christian spirituality develops into neurosis and selfishness, becomes pretentious, and even turns violent.

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